BRITISH GP

LE MANS

AUTOSPORT

BRITISH GP 2025

WE HEAR FROM THE FOUR HOME HEROES

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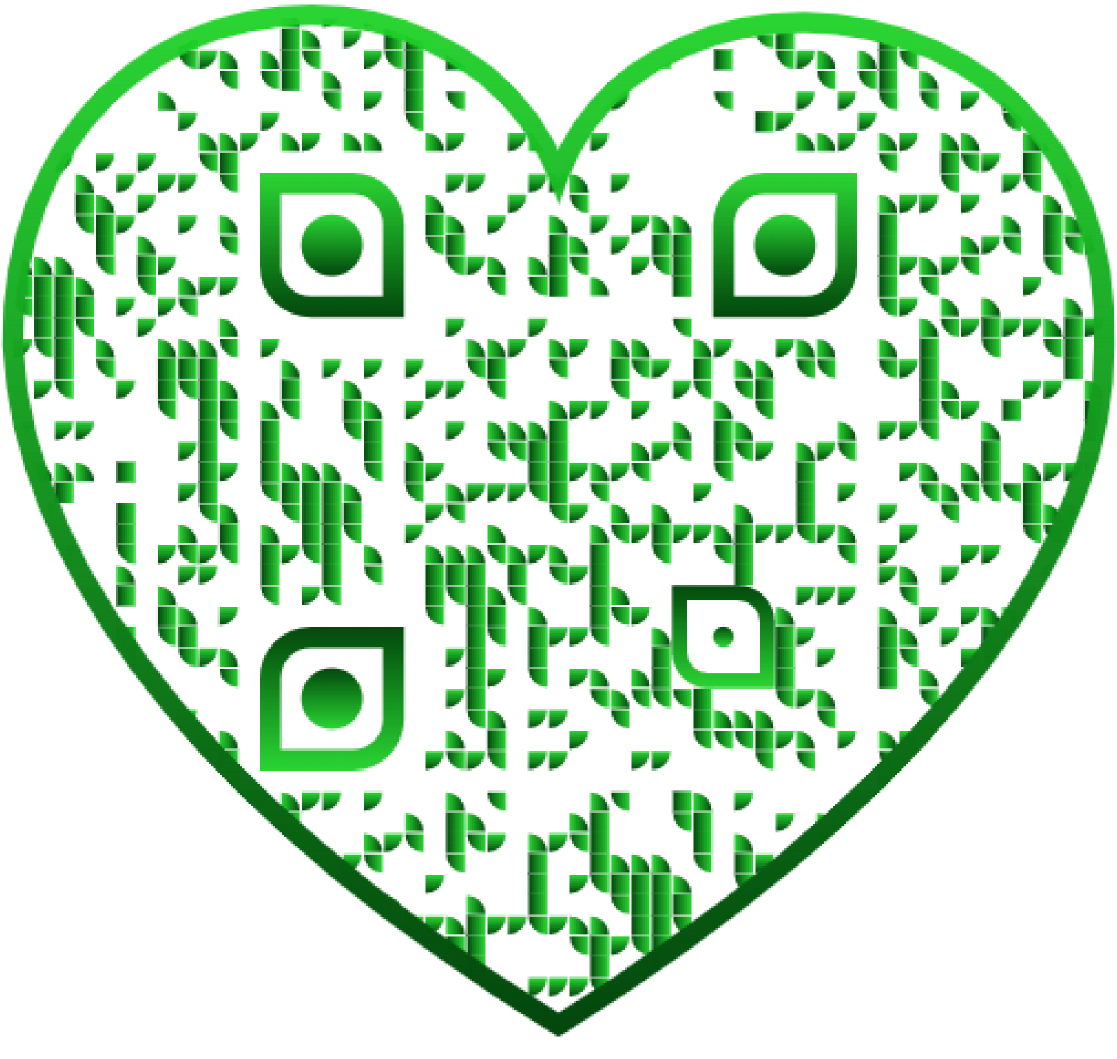
GP RACING

AUGUST 2025



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FORMULA 1

12 Spanish GP debrief
14 Canadian GP debrief
16 Pit + Paddock
20 Opinion: Oleg Karpov
22 Opinion: Mark Mann-Bryans
24 Opinion: Pat Symonds

BRITISH GP PREVIEW

26 Introduction
28 Lando Norris
32 George Russell
36 Lewis Hamilton
40 Ollie Bearman

44 Silverstone Museum F1 exhibition
46 What's going on at Aston Martin?
54 Martin Brundle's greatest races
64 1975 British GP chaos
70 Alternative view
72 Great debate

SINGLE SEATERS

76 Pit + Paddock
78 Opinion: Katy Fairman
80 The Brits in the F2 title battle

SPORTSCARS

88 Le Mans debrief: Hypercar
94 Le Mans debrief: LMGT3
96 Le Mans debrief: LMP2
97 Le Mans 24 Hours results
98 Pit + Paddock
105 Opinion: Gary Watkins

RALLYING

108 Special Stage
109 Opinion: Tom Howard
110 Neuville's rally team

TOURING CARS

116 BTCC Thruxton debrief
118 Pit + Paddock
121 Opinion: Marcus Simmons
122 Super Touring's nearly man

NATIONAL

128 Pit + Paddock
133 Autosport National Rankings
135 Opinion: Stephen Lickorish
136 National highlights of the month
138 Shaun Lynn's new MRL era
142 Star club car: Willment-Climax

FINISHING STRAIGHT

146 What's on
154 Gear up: product reviews
156 Star cars for sale
158 From the archive: 1968 Belgian GP
160 Autosport 75: 1992 British GP
161 Next month

26 JUNE-23 JULY 2025

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GEORGE
RUSSELL

RACE DEBRIEF
FERRARI DOMINATES AS
KUBICA LEADS THE WAY

THE NEARLY MAN
OF SUPER TOURING

IGNITION

TEE/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

British fans will flock to Silverstone, 75 years after the former airfield hosted the first championship race

Silverstone stars and a superb Le Mans

Lando Norris, George Russell, Lewis Hamilton and Ollie Bearman will head to their home grand prix at Silverstone in different states of mind. Russell is arguably vying with Max Verstappen as *the* driver of the Formula 1 season so far following his brilliant victory in Montreal, Norris has to bounce back from a sequence of errors that have handed the championship initiative to McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri, and Hamilton is still on the roller coaster ride of his first Ferrari season. Rookie Bearman will probably arrive under the least pressure but will be looking forward to his first British Grand Prix.

We hear from all four in our Silverstone preview, which begins on page 26, and also speak to two of the British rising stars set to compete at the front of the F2 field in the supporting cast. Arvid Lindblad and Luke Browning are trying to prove that they are ready to step up to the sport's pinnacle (p80).

Martin Brundle had many good days at Silverstone and he helps Autosport pick out the best drives of his long and illustrious career (p54), while Paul Fearnley looks back at one of the craziest F1 races the Northamptonshire venue has ever hosted: the 1975 British GP (p64).

Although the race didn't make his list, Brundle was a winner of the Le Mans 24 Hours. The 93rd running of the world's greatest endurance contest remained in doubt until the final minutes. Robert Kubica added another chapter to his remarkable story since his 2011 rally crash by taking victory alongside Yifei Ye and Phil Hanson in AF Corse's satellite Ferrari 499P. Gary Watkins and Stephen Lickorish were there and explain how the yellow Ferrari made it a hat-trick of Le Mans wins for the legendary Italian marque in our special report (p88), which also covers the closely fought LMP2 and LMGT3 categories.

Elsewhere in the issue, we take a look at the British Touring Car Championship round at Thruxton (p116) amid some arguments concerning the straightline speed of certain cars (p121), catch up with former Super Touring star Anthony Reid (p122), and pick out some of the highlights from recent UK events in our 17-page National section.

We'll have a bumper issue of the magazine next time. As well as a special report on the British GP, we'll be celebrating 75 years of Autosport by looking at some of motorsport's most important game changers. Look out for the 196-page **Summer issue** from **24 July**. You can also subscribe to the magazine at www.autosportmedia.com/offer/Autosport

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BRITISH GP LE MANS
AUTOSPORT
BRITISH GP 2025
WE HEAR FROM THE FOUR HOME HEROES

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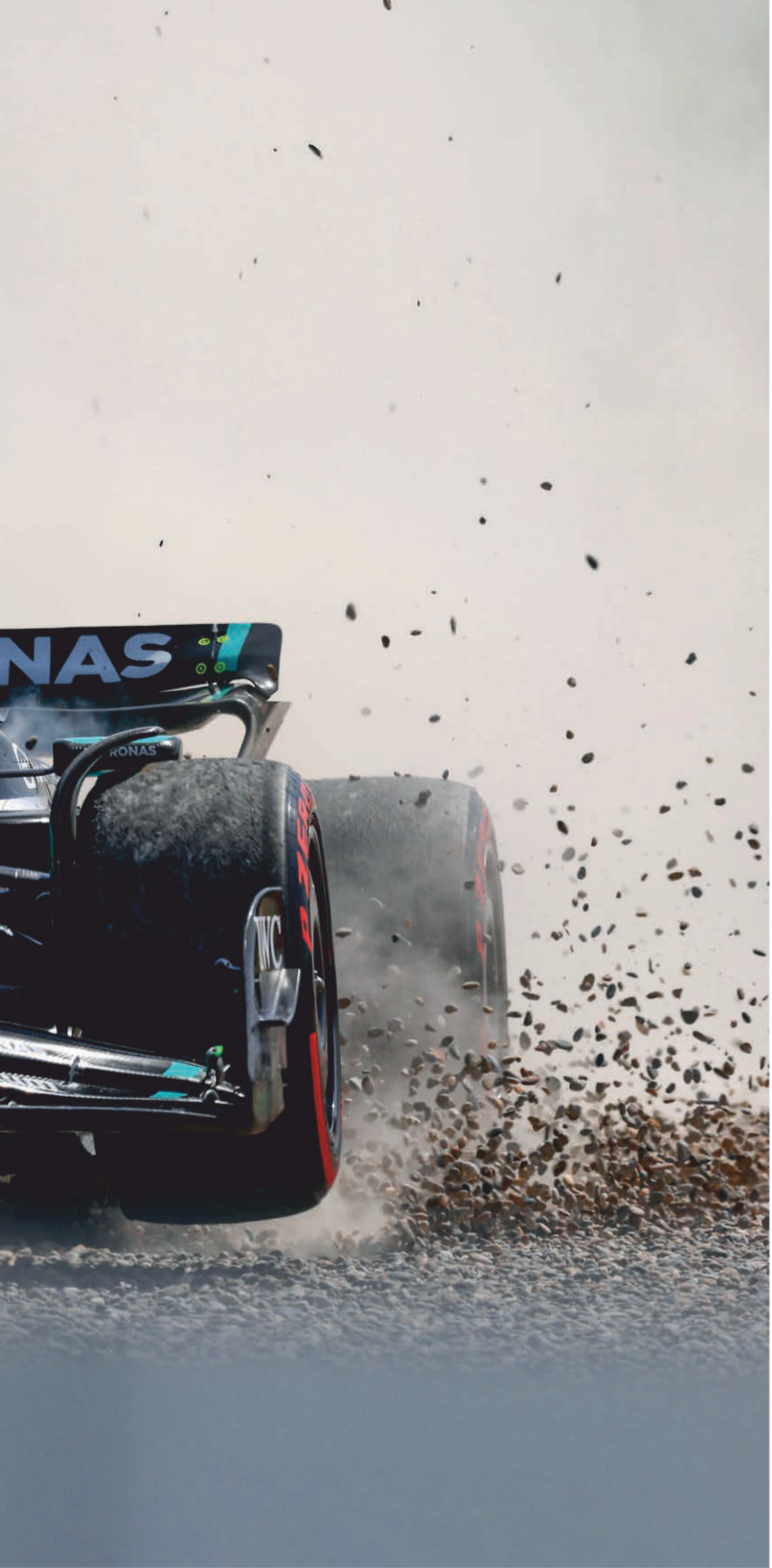


Rough ride for Antonelli

Andrea Kimi Antonelli's Mercedes clatters to a halt in the Barcelona gravel after his hopes of a decent points finish – he was running in seventh place – went up in a puff of power unit smoke on lap 54 of the Spanish Grand Prix, triggering a safety car intervention (race debrief, page 12). Following a run of tough results for the teenager, Mercedes technical director James Allison conceded: "He's full of the optimism of youth, but I know our failures have taken a few chunks out of Kimi along the way. Two DNFs in three races is a tough pill to swallow."

Photographer Zak Mauger/ LAT Images/Getty Images

Where Barcelona, Spain
When Sunday 1 June 2025

Details Canon EOS R1
RF400mm lens, 1/1000th @ F8

GABRIEL
BORTOLETO

Hulk shows how it's done

A fired-up Nico Hulkenberg greets Sauber team-mate Gabriel Bortoleto following a strong result for the squad at Barcelona, if not quite for both drivers. The veteran racer was buzzing after overtaking Lewis Hamilton's Ferrari on the penultimate lap of the Spanish Grand Prix, then netting 10 points for a fifth-place finish – though he admitted it was only the age differential of their tyres that made it possible. While rookie Bortoleto finished two places short of the points, Hulkenberg's feat lifted Sauber to eighth in the constructors' table.

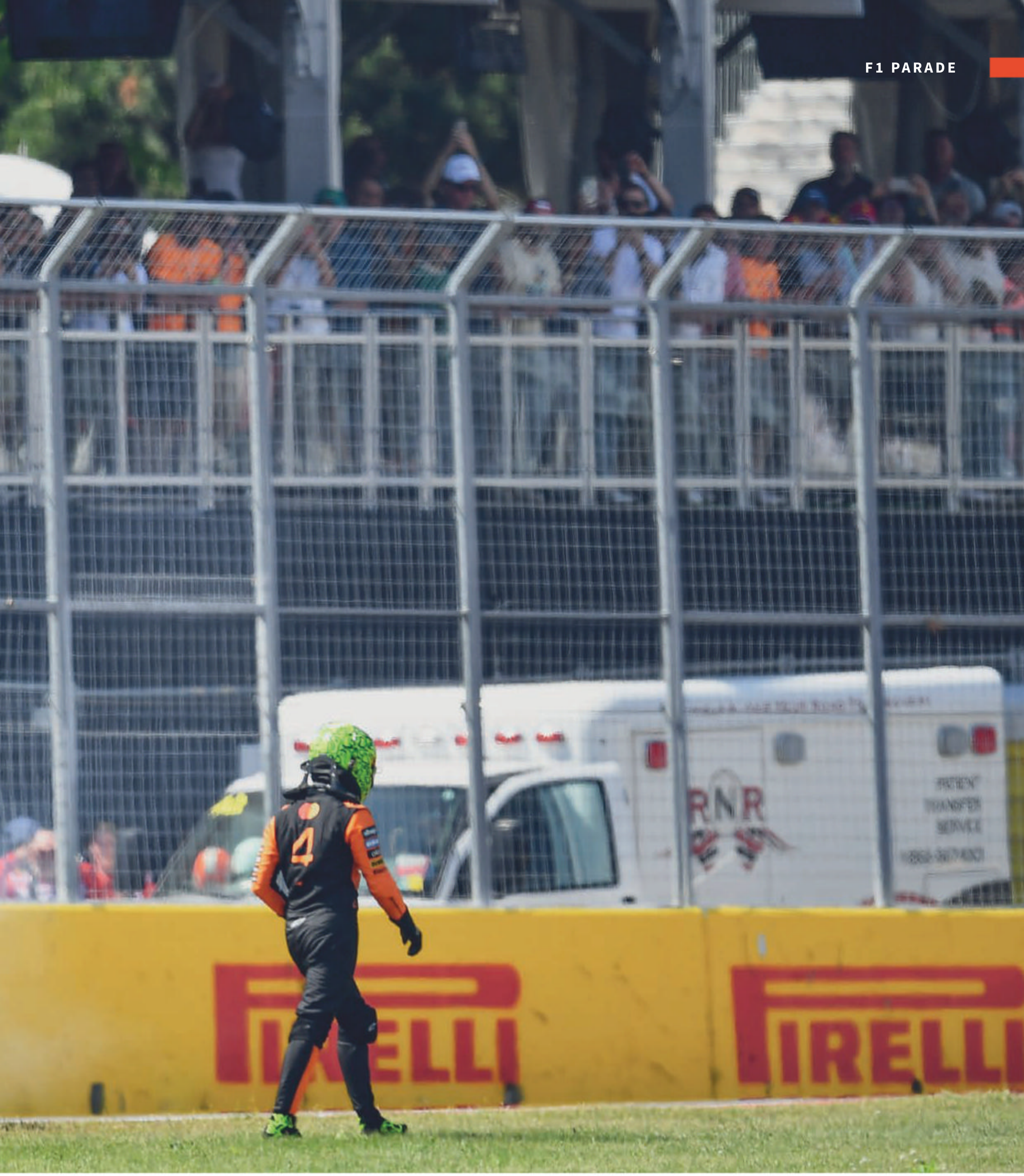
Photographer Kym Illman/ Getty Images

Where Barcelona, Spain
When Sunday 1 June 2025

Details Canon EOS R1
RF100-300mm lens, 1/800th @ F2.8

McLaren 'mare in Montreal

A dejected Lando Norris walks away from the wreckage of his car after a failed attempt to pass Oscar Piastri on lap 67 of the Canadian Grand Prix resulted in the motorsport cardinal sin of intra-team contact. It was an incident that McLaren would have known was inevitable at some point – and was remarkably similar to the clash between Jenson Button and Lewis Hamilton back in 2011. Always one to own his errors, Norris was predictably contrite: "I thought Oscar moved a bit more to the right – not to leave a gap, obviously, I don't expect something to be easy from him. I just misjudged it, it was all my mistake, I take full blame, so I apologise to my whole team and to Oscar for attempting something like that." Race debrief, page 14.


4
PIRELLI
PIRELLI
RNR
PATIENT
TRANSFER
SERVICE

Photographer James Sutton/
LAT/Getty Images

Where Montreal, Quebec, Canada
When Sunday 15 June 2025

Details Nikon D5, 1/1000th @ F4

FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
RACE DEBRIEF

Piastri enjoys his clean getaway while Norris is demoted by Verstappen

RAMOS/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

FORMULA 1

RED BULL BUNGLES PROMPT VERSTAPPEN MELTDOWN AS McLAREN STRETCHES AWAY

For several months now, the Red Bull spin machine has been plying the line that McLaren's dominance is a result of playing fast and loose with the technical regulations. Eliminate the aero-elastic front and rear wings, and the rear brake cowls lined with phase-change materials, and the suggestion was that the precious status quo (ie Red Bull supremacy) would be restored.

In parallel with this, Max Verstappen has stuck to his own line: that his car is a bit of a dog, as evinced by the poor sap in the other garage – a rotating cast of characters – struggling to avoid elimination in the first round of qualifying.

At the Spanish Grand Prix the FIA implemented a more stringent testing regime to clamp down on front-wing flexing – one Red Bull had been lobbying to be introduced much earlier – and, if immediate and sweeping change in the pecking order was the desired outcome, it was not to be. Indeed, in qualifying Verstappen was three tenths off polesitter Oscar Piastri, a reasonably substantial deficit given that Barcelona is what's now known as a 'pears' circuit on the Andrea Stella scale of relative performance – a track that theoretically favours the RB21's characteristics.

Dig deeper and there was evidence of subtle shifts. Pole was slower than last year despite Pirelli reporting higher cornering loadings. Teams reported more understeer in slow corners and a tendency for cars to be 'pointier' in high-speed, traits that now have to be dialled out through mechanical changes rather than smoothed over by trick aerodynamics. But overall, as McLaren team boss Stella pointed out: "Everything is so small that it's within the 'noise' of variation from one lap to the other."

In the race, though, Red Bull came tantalisingly close to springing a surprise – with one car at least, since the benighted Yuki Tsunoda started from the pitlane after qualifying 20th, baffled by lack of grip. Piastri had essayed the cleaner final Q3 lap of the two McLarens and deserved to be on pole ahead of Lando Norris. He merited the early lead, too, getting away well while Norris launched more slowly. He later admitted to being caught out by the timing of the lights going out. That left Norris having to rebuff both Verstappen and George Russell into Turn 1. He could only manage one. The Red Bull driver slipped around the outside while Russell, his Mercedes baulked behind Norris, then lost ground to the Ferraris of Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc.

It took Norris until the start of lap 13 to get past Verstappen, at which point the world champion pitted to get off the soft tyres with which he'd started the race. This was absolutely the earliest anyone aiming for a two-stop race was likely to pit but, if Red Bull hoped to introduce an element of uncertainty over its intentions and lure McLaren into stopping early, it was to be disappointed.

McLaren spotted the three-stop intention for what it was – not difficult, given Verstappen put on another set of softs – and stuck to its guns. Perhaps if Red Bull had two drivers up at the front, matters would have panned out differently and McLaren might have felt compelled to pit one of its drivers to cover the potential undercut from Verstappen. But Tsunoda was nowhere, having made no headway through traffic and already got off the medium-compound tyres

Things briefly get physical when Leclerc clears Verstappen at restart

HONE/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

with which he'd started the race.

So McLaren stuck to its optimal strategy and left Norris and Piastri out until laps 21 and 22, enabling Verstappen to enjoy six laps classified in the lead. He had a 5.7s margin over Piastri when the stops panned out and was clearly on a mission to exploit the clear air to find more. Given the pitlane time loss of around 23s at Barcelona and the potency of the undercut, he needed to find something in the order of 20s to ameliorate the cost of his extra stop.

It looked to be working as Verstappen set laps in the 1m19s, but that soon leaked into 1m20s as the balance swung the other way, the McLaren drivers having brought their medium Pirellis up to temperature in the gradual fashion that is this rubber's preference. At the end of lap 29, just as Piastri was bearing down on him, Verstappen dived into the pits for mediums; with over half the race yet to run, here was the definitive evidence that he would have to stop a third time.

Still McLaren could not afford to be complacent – and as Verstappen rattled off 1m18s laps, passing Leclerc within six laps of leaving the pits and reducing the gap to the leaders below 10s, the alarms began to ring.

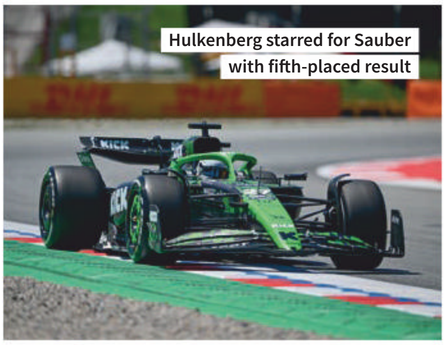
"We thought it's not going to be a problem because we have already overtaken him on track," Stella said later, "and we should have a decent pace advantage. But the reality is he was fast. He was fast and when we went on the medium tyres in the second stint, we were pushing, controlling the pace and he was catching up very rapidly. More rapidly than we hoped for.

"We asked our drivers to push more. And both gave answers like, 'I'm not sure I have much more pace than this'. So at that stage we were a little worried that it could have been a situation more open than we thought it would be in the first stint."

Norris got to within 2s of his team-mate but traffic, in the form of the duelling Liam Lawson and Ollie Bearman, enabled Piastri to open the gap again and Verstappen to close in – to the extent that when the Dutchman made his third stop at the end of lap 47, McLaren responded to head off the potential undercut. They rejoined with Piastri still leading ahead of Norris and Verstappen, but seventh-placed Andrea Kimi Antonelli's Mercedes engine chose the race's final phase to become a disruptive influence.

A safety car deployment to cover the removal of Antonelli's stranded car provoked hard choices up and down the pitlane. With 12 laps to run, those on ageing or pre-used tyres juggled their options. McLaren had no new tyres left apart from the unloved hard C1s, and pitted both its drivers for used softs; Red Bull, faced with a similar choice, chose the C1s.

The race restarted with six laps to go and Verstappen instantly had to quell a huge twitch of oversteer under power at the exit of the final corner. Leclerc seized his moment and got ahead with a brief clash of wheels; Russell tried to dive up the inside at Turn 1 and demote Verstappen to fifth, nearly made it, but then had to gather a slide at the apex, which pushed Verstappen onto the escape road.


Hulkenberg starred for Sauber with fifth-placed result

DIODATO/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

Verstappen took the prescribed route back onto the track and emerged ahead of Russell, only to be told by race engineer Gianpiero Lambiase to give the position back. By now Verstappen was hitting his own rev limiter and, on the run to Turn 5, backed off as if to let Russell pass – then accelerated into him again.

It was a yobbish moment of utter madness and Verstappen was arguably lucky to escape with a 10-second penalty, which demoted him to 10th after finishing fifth on the road, plus a three-point endorsement that left him one point away from a race ban. It emerged that the stewards would have taken the tap from Russell as mitigation anyway and not penalised Verstappen for rejoining ahead of him.

The hooliganry distracted not only from Piastri's coolly assured win, but also from Leclerc's well-executed run to the final podium spot. He was alone among the frontrunners in saving two new sets of medium tyres for the race, and sacrificed his final Q3 run to have a set of less-used softs for the race. By contrast, Hamilton's achievement in outqualifying his team-mate turned to ashes in his mouth; first he was called upon to give way to Leclerc in the race, then he slipped back as his rear axle struggled for grip.

Nico Hulkenberg also merited his 10 out of 10 score in Autosport's online driver ratings after a mighty first lap, plus a long middle stint on mediums, put him in a position to pass Hamilton at the restart to finish in what would become fifth place from 15th on the grid for the struggling Sauber team.

STUART CODLING

For ratings of all the drivers go to autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings

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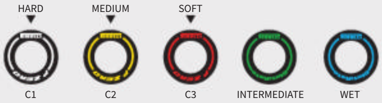
RESULTS ROUND 9/24

CIRCUIT DE BARCELONA-CATALUNYA
01.06.25 / 66 LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GRID
1	**Oscar Piastri** McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	1h32m57.375s	1
2	**Lando Norris** McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+2.471s	2
3	**Charles Leclerc** Ferrari SF-25	+10.455s	7
4	**George Russell** Mercedes F1 W16	+11.359s	4
5	**Nico Hulkenberg** Sauber-Ferrari C45	+13.648s	15
6	**Lewis Hamilton** Ferrari SF-25	+15.508s	5
7	**Isack Hadjar** Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	+16.022s	9
8	**Pierre Gasly** Alpine-Renault A525	+17.882s	8
9	**Fernando Alonso** Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	+21.564s	10
10	**Max Verstappen** Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	+21.826s	3
11	**Liam Lawson** Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	+25.532s	13
12	**Gabriel Bortoleto** Sauber-Ferrari C45	+25.996s	12
13	**Yuki Tsunoda** Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	+28.822s	19
14	**Carlos Sainz** Williams-Mercedes FW47	+29.309s	17
15	**Franco Colapinto** Alpine-Renault A525	+31.381s	18
16	**Esteban Ocon** Haas-Ferrari VF-25	+32.197s	16
17	**Ollie Bearman** Haas-Ferrari VF-25	+37.065s	14
R	**Andrea Kimi Antonelli** Mercedes F1 W16	53 laps/ power unit	6
R	**Alexander Albon** Williams-Mercedes FW47	27 laps/accident damage	11
NS	**Lance Stroll** Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	hand/wrist injury	

FASTEST LAP **Piastri** 1m15.743s (137.536mph)

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Piastri 186; 2 **Norris** 176; 3 **Verstappen** 137; 4 **Russell** 111; 5 **Leclerc** 94; 6 **Hamilton** 71; 7 **Antonelli** 48; 8 **Albon** 42; 9 **Hadjar** 21; 10 **Ocon** 20; 11 **Hulkenberg** 16; 12 **Stroll** 14; 13 **Sainz** 12; 14 **Gasly** 11; 15 **Tsunoda** 10; 16 **Bearman** 6; 17 **Lawson** 4; 18 **Alonso** 2; 19 **Bortoleto** 0; 20 **Jack Doohan** 0; 21 **Colapinto** 0.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 McLaren 362; 2 **Ferrari** 165; 3 **Mercedes** 159; 4 **Red Bull** 144; 5 **Williams** 54; 6 **Racing Bulls** 28; 7 **Haas** 26; 8 **Sauber** 16; 9 **Aston Martin** 16; 10 **Alpine** 11.

Mercedes team-mates celebrate their 1-3 finish. Meanwhile a protest is pending…

M SUTTON/FORMULA 1/GETTY IMAGES

RUSSELL WINS IN CANADA AFTER UNSUCCESSFUL RED BULL PROTEST

George Russell's first victory of the season, in which he converted his maiden pole position of the year into a dominant race, should have led to an evening for Mercedes to savour – especially given he was joined on the Montreal podium by 18-year-old team-mate Andrea Kimi Antonelli. But the fourth grand prix win of Russell's career was overshadowed before, during and after his successful afternoon, and the King's Lynn racer was probably halfway across the Atlantic when he could finally toast his first success since the 2024 Las Vegas Grand Prix.

Thursday's media day had been dominated by the fallout from Spain, with questions put to Max Verstappen and the Red Bull hierarchy surrounding the Dutchman's behaviour in Barcelona that left the reigning world champion teetering on the cusp of a race ban. Verstappen initially gave short shrift to such a line of questioning. Asked whether he needed to change his approach to racing, he replied: "Why should I?" But by the post-qualifying press conference he was openly hostile to all enquiries, sniping at moderator Tom Clarkson that it was "really pissing me off".

He was in the press conference by virtue of qualifying second at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, his fine flying lap bettered by only the Mercedes of Russell, who made it back-to-back Canadian GP pole positions after looking strong all weekend.

That meant pre-race speculation was abound. Would Verstappen run Russell off the road and risk picking up that penalty point? Maybe Russell himself would go elbows out in an attempt to goad the Red Bull driver into doing so? What about McLaren's championship leader Oscar Piastri starting in third? (More on that later!)

To the credit of both Russell and Verstappen, when the race actually got under way it was a good, clean fight, with Antonelli's pass on Piastri the main highlight of an opening lap that passed by without incident for the frontrunners. So too, in all honesty, did much of the ensuing 66 laps. The gaps out in front were small but they remained largely consistent, slightly reminiscent of the Japanese GP, where the leaders followed each other closely without ever really being able to strike, but strategic variation and the long back straight made this race more interesting than the Suzuka contest.

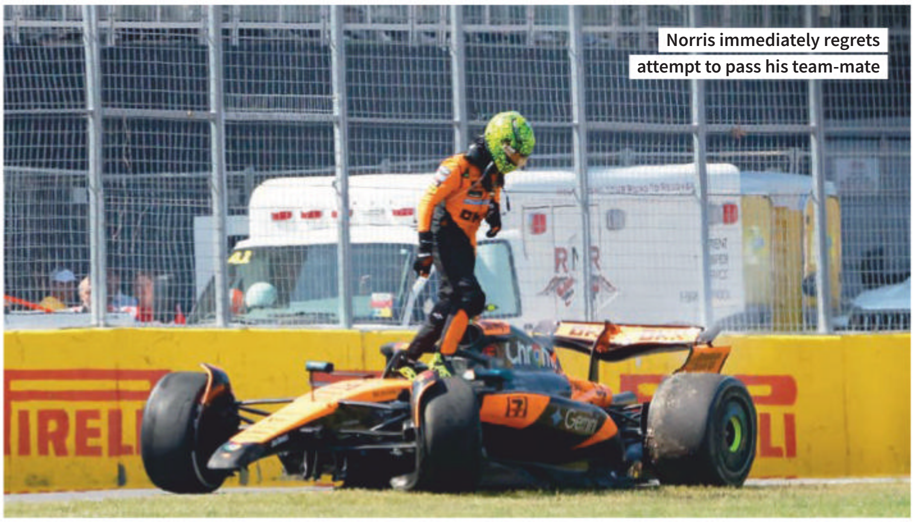
Lando Norris, who had started on the hard tyre instead of the medium in an attempt to recover from a poor seventh on the grid, decided he needed to try to make up places given his deficit to McLaren team-mate Piastri at the head of the drivers' championship. That was a decision he would come to regret very quickly.

Following a couple of nibbles at the Australian with the assistance of DRS, Norris closed up again towards the end of lap 66, although this time Piastri had reeled in Antonelli enough to also benefit from the drag reduction system.

Norris, though, was undeterred and, after backing out of a move into Turn 12, he opted to lunge down the left of Piastri on the pitstraight, only to run out of room and end up hitting the

Polesitter Russell leads as Antonelli prepares to demote Piastri

J SUTTON/LAT/GETTY IMAGES



Norris immediately regrets attempt to pass his team-mate

S BLOXHAM/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

wall as well as his unsuspecting colleague, who suffered damage but was still able to hold on to fourth place.

It was a different story for Norris, though, who instantly came over the team radio to admit guilt for causing the collision, and then trudged back to the garage in the knowledge that the gap to Piastri was now only going to widen as a result of an ill-advised move.

He was clearly cut up by his actions and conceded that he had not covered himself in glory. "Our rule number one is to not make contact with your team-mate and it's what I did," rued Norris, who fell to 22 points behind Piastri. "McLaren is my family. I race for them, you know, every single weekend. I try and do well for them, more often than I try and do well for myself. So, when I let them down like this and when I make a fool of myself in a moment like today, I have a lot of regret. I'm not proud of that and I feel bad, and I feel like I let down my team and that's for me always the worst feeling."

Norris's apology was promptly accepted by both team and team-mate alike, and McLaren will lick its wounds before focusing on the remainder of what is still likely to be a very successful season for the team.

With debris from Norris's McLaren now littering the track, what was shaping up to be a routine finish to the Canadian GP threw up the unknown of a late safety car, with the field passing through the pits as the papaya pieces were cleared by marshals. The situation seemingly negated the prospect of Russell being challenged for the race win, especially when it became clear that the grand prix would in all likelihood finish behind the safety car, but there was drama to come that would run well into the night.

At one point, television coverage showed Russell braking hard behind the safety car and Verstappen hastily getting onto the radio to point it out. It was a small moment that neither driver was asked about in the post-race press conference. It felt inconsequential.

That was until news broke that Red Bull had lodged a protest with the stewards, claiming Russell had driven erratically behind the safety car and had also engaged in "sportsmanship" by jumping on the radio to signal that Verstappen had overtaken him under safety car conditions.

The pair were summoned to the stewards at 1750 local time, spending 45 minutes pleading their cases alongside team representatives. Then came the long wait. It took over five and a half hours for the FIA to communicate that the protest had been rejected by the stewards because it was not founded.

Russell may have popped the champagne cork on the podium, but he was finally able to celebrate a landmark win, with Verstappen having to settle for second and Antonelli taking his first F1 podium, becoming the third-youngest driver to do so.

Elsewhere, it was another weekend for Ferrari to forget as team principal Fred Vasseur batted away speculation over his position, with Italian media in particular sticking the knife in over the team being so far adrift of McLaren. While Ferrari was winning at Le Mans, Charles Leclerc – whose own future was also a topic of discussion – came home fifth in Montreal, with Lewis Hamilton sixth.

It proved to be another galling weekend for the seven-time world champion, whose race was ruined when he ran over a marmot early on in the race, causing damage to the floor of his Ferrari that meant his pace fell off a cliff. It was, perhaps for the team, a case of Groundhog Day…

MARK MANN-BRYANS

For ratings of all the drivers go to autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings

POWERED BY motorsport STATS

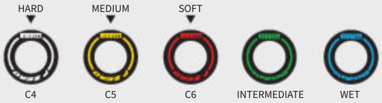
RESULTS ROUND 10/24

CIRCUIT GILLES-VILLENEUVE
15.06.25 / 70 LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GRID
1	**George Russell** Mercedes F1 W16	1h31m52.688s	1
2	**Max Verstappen** Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	+0.228s	2
3	**Andrea Kimi Antonelli** Mercedes F1 W16	+1.014s	4
4	**Oscar Piastri** McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+2.109s	3
5	**Charles Leclerc** Ferrari SF-25	+3.442s	8
6	**Lewis Hamilton** Ferrari SF-25	+10.713s	5
7	**Fernando Alonso** Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	+10.972s	6
8	**Nico Hulkenberg** Sauber-Ferrari C45	+15.364s	11
9	**Esteban Ocon** Haas-Ferrari VF-25	-1 lap/+1.473s	14
10	**Carlos Sainz** Williams-Mercedes FW47	-1 lap/+1.886s	16
11	**Ollie Bearman** Haas-Ferrari VF-25	-1 lap/+3.717s	13
12	**Yuki Tsunoda** Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	-1 lap/+5.456s	18
13	**Franco Colapinto** Alpine-Renault A525	-1 lap/+7.018s	10
14	**Gabriel Bortoleto** Sauber-Ferrari C45	-1 lap/+7.879s	15
15	**Pierre Gasly** Alpine-Renault A525	-1 lap/+7.950s	20
16	**Isack Hadjar** Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	-1 lap/+8.737s	12
17	**Lance Stroll** Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	-1 lap/+9.063s	17
18	**Lando Norris** McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	66 laps/accident	7
R	**Liam Lawson** Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	53 laps/power unit	19
R	**Alexander Albon** Williams-Mercedes FW47	46 laps/power unit	9

FASTEST LAP **Russell** 1m14.119s (131.616mph)

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Piastri 198; 2 **Norris** 176; 3 **Verstappen** 155; 4 **Russell** 136; 5 **Leclerc** 104; 6 **Hamilton** 79; 7 **Antonelli** 63; 8 **Albon** 42; 9 **Ocon** 22; 10 **Hadjar** 21; 11 **Hulkenberg** 20; 12 **Stroll** 14; 13 **Sainz** 13; 14 **Gasly** 11; 15 **Tsunoda** 10; 16 **Alonso** 8; 17 **Bearman** 6; 18 **Lawson** 4; 19 **Bortoleto** 0; 20 **Colapinto** 0; 21 **Doohan** 0.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 McLaren 374; 2 **Mercedes** 199; 3 **Ferrari** 183; 4 **Red Bull** 162; 5 **Williams** 55; 6 **Haas** 28; 7 **Racing Bulls** 28; 8 **Aston Martin** 22; 9 **Sauber** 20; 10 **Alpine** 11.

Sulayem has flying start in battle with Sainz (right)

GUIDI/GC IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

FIA PRESIDENCY

Sulayem shores up support

Changes to statutes could impact Sainz bid, while wife of Ecclestone and member clubs throw weight behind incumbent

FILIP CLEEREN & MARK MANN-BRYANS

The FIA General Assembly has voted through changes to the governing body's statutes and ethics code in what is seen as a victory for president Mohammed Ben Sulayem, amid criticism for eroding governance standards. This could play a part in thwarting a presidential bid from Carlos Sainz Sr.

In the gathering of the General Assembly in Macau in June, the amendments voted through are said to bring forward the deadline for potential presidential candidates to declare, increase the president's influence on the FIA Senate membership, and align the terms of office of the Audit, Ethics and Nomination committees with the president's four-year term. They also include provisions for potential presidential candidates to be blocked if their record calls into question their integrity.

FIA members approved the statute amendments with an 83.35% majority. The ethics code changes were voted through by 88.83%. "The FIA has taken steps since 2021 to strengthen its corporate governance policies," said the FIA in a statement supplied to Autosport. "These policies guide the FIA's operations and ensure its rules, practices and processes are robust and transparent.

"The proposed amendments to the FIA Statutes are designed to further strengthen processes around governance and confidentiality. They will grant the Nominations Committee more time to examine the eligibility criteria of candidates, and help to ensure consistency and rigour in the electoral process.

"All proposed amendments were voted through by a super majority of FIA Member Clubs at the General Assemblies, in line with the democratic process which governs decision making within the Federation."

ILLMAN/GETTY IMAGES

This is yet another controversial subject linked with Ben Sulayem's presidency. The 63-year-old Emirati was accused by a whistleblower of interfering with the stewarding processes at the 2023 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix to overturn Fernando Alonso's penalty. He was also key to a ban on drivers swearing in official press conferences with the threat of hefty fines, but this has since been watered down following widespread disagreement.

Ben Sulayem has recently been consolidating his support from the FIA's member clubs in an effort to ward off a presidental bid from Sainz (above), whose consideration of standing was reported in last month's Autosport. Sainz's hopes of ousting Ben Sulayem have taken an early blow after a hefty number of automobile clubs signed a letter throwing their weight behind the incumbent.

He has received widespread support from 36 FIA clubs largely based in the Americas, plus FIA vice-president for sport – South America Fabiana Ecclestone, who is the wife of former F1 ringmaster Bernie. The president also enjoys strong support in Africa and Asia.

Following the resignation of Robert Reid as deputy president for sport, who cited a breakdown in standards for his decision to leave his post, the General Assembly has formally ratified the nomination of Malcolm Wilson as Reid's replacement. M-Sport chief Wilson was put forward by Ben Sulayem as a candidate in April (see p109).

FORMULA 1

MADRID GETS SEPTEMBER DATE

Madrid's new Formula 1 circuit will take the Spanish Grand Prix title from Barcelona in 2026, when it hosts its first event in September. The all-new 5.4km venue based around the IFEMA exhibition centre features a banked loop with a 24% gradient, albeit with a series of 90-degree and fiddly turns that have received mixed reviews. Barcelona remains on the calendar for at least one more year, meaning Spain will host two GPs for the first time since 2012, when Valencia ended its four-year spell hosting a street race.

To maintain the 24-race calendar, Imola is the unlucky venue to be left on the cutting room floor; the Emilia Romagna GP had long been in doubt given Imola's compact size and the growing interest from more moneyed race promoters in hosting a grand prix. Italy now reverts to hosting just one race.

Melbourne once more hosts the season opener on 8 March, with China the following weekend, but the most notable changes to the order will come in May. The Canadian GP has been moved forward with the aim of grouping races by region, albeit with a three-week break to the Miami GP; Montreal's new 24 May date means that the race will clash directly with the Indianapolis 500. This pushes the Monaco GP back to the first weekend of June.

Zandvoort will host its final race in 2026 after the summer break, owing to concerns about the long-term financial implications of hosting a Dutch GP amid growing interest from other venues, something that the privately funded race was not willing to risk.

The season ends with two punishing triple-weekenders; first, the relatively sensible grouping of the United States, Mexican and Brazilian races, followed by the timezone-trotting Las Vegas, Qatar and Abu Dhabi finale.

FILIP CLEEREN & JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

FORMULA 1 CALENDAR

DATE	VENUE
8 March	**Melbourne** (AUS)
15 March	**Shanghai** (CHN)
29 March	**Suzuka** (JPN)
12 April	**Sakhir** (BHR)
19 April	**Jeddah** (SAU)
3 May	**Miami** (USA)
24 May	**Montreal** (CAN)
7 June	**Monte Carlo** (MCO)
14 June	**Barcelona** (ESP)
28 June	**Red Bull Ring** (AUT)
5 July	**Silverstone** (GBR)
19 July	**Spa** (BEL)
26 July	**Hungaroring** (HUN)
23 August	**Zandvoort** (NLD)
6 September	**Monza** (ITA)
13 September	**Madrid** (ESP)
27 September	**Baku** (AZE)
11 October	**Marina Bay** (SGP)
25 October	**Austin** (USA)
1 November	**Mexico City** (MEX)
8 November	**Interlagos** (BRA)
21 November	**Las Vegas** (USA)
29 November	**Lusail** (QAT)
6 December	**Yas Marina** (ARE)

Last GP in Madrid area was 1981 Jarama thriller

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SAVA

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ILLMAN/GETTY IMAGES

RUSSELL SUBJECT OF ASTON SPECULATION

George Russell is a surprise target to lead Aston Martin's Formula 1 revival in 2026. The Canadian Grand Prix winner is yet to sign an extension to his deal with Mercedes, and Autosport understands that the 27-year-old is being considered as part of the Silverstone team's plans. Aston Martin would have to displace either Fernando Alonso or Lance Stroll to make room.

The team has charged design legend Adrian Newey with the responsibility of producing a competitive car given the introduction of new engine and chassis rules for 2026. Russell is out of contract at the end of this year with Mercedes, although he stated that "I have been quite open to say my intentions are to stay with Mercedes. That's always been clear."

He also conceded that it would be natural for Mercedes to act to poach Max Verstappen from Red Bull, should the chance arise. Mercedes CEO Toto Wolff is optimistic that Russell will commit to a new deal, with a timeline agreed to conclude talks.

A clause understood to be in Verstappen's contract, in which the Dutchman could trigger an exit if he did not occupy a top-four position in the points after the Austrian Grand Prix, is to lapse since he holds a 51-point advantage over fifth-placed Charles Leclerc.

BEN HUNT & ROBERTO CHINCHERO

KITKAT LAUNCH

F1 is preparing to deepen its ties with Nestle through a series of new activations and promotions to highlight its official chocolate bar, KitKat. The two brands will roll out a series of activations in Mexico as well as giveaways and in-store promotions.

F1 SPONSORS: $2BN

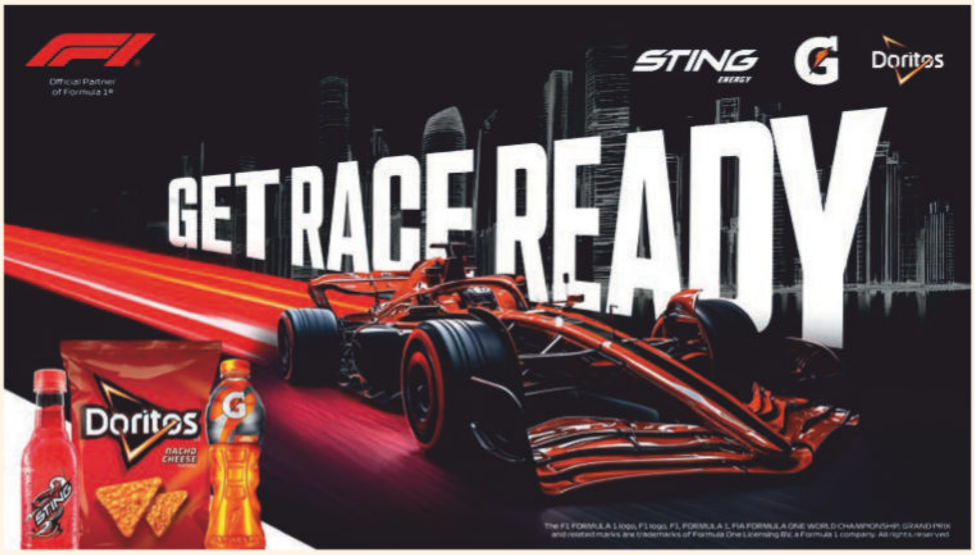
Formula 1 has become a sponsorship juggernaut in recent years and new, independent research by SponsorUnited has shown that over $2billion was earned in 2024. Only the NFL now brings in more revenue on an annual basis.

TOMMY AT CADILLAC

Cadillac has announced its first partnership ahead of its 2026 F1 debut, signalling a commitment to its all-American identity with a deal with Tommy Hilfiger. The New York fashion house becomes Cadillac's apparel partner and lifestyle sponsor in a multi-year agreement.

THE BUSINESS FORMULA

Scan the QR code to sign up for the Autosport Business newsletter. Every Wednesday morning our F1 business correspondent, Mark Mann-Bryans, pieces together the latest from the world of motorsport for delivery direct to your inbox.



FORMULA 1

A NEW STING IN THE TALE FOR FORMULA 1

PepsiCo has become the latest global brand to be enticed into the world of Formula 1. The American food and drink giant will enter the series from next year with three of its key products: Doritos, Gatorade and Sting.

Sting, probably the least-known brand in the United Kingdom, is PepsiCo's energy drink and is a younger product than many others in its portfolio. Now PepsiCo hopes to tap into the increasing global popularity of F1 for more brand awareness.

"I think Formula 1 is just a really unique partner, unique sports property, and honestly probably even bigger than that," PepsiCo VP of marketing Vandita Pandey told *The Business Formula*. "Obviously, you get a lot of drama that comes through in different ways, but there's almost like this dopamine hit that it gives them, but that's making it so much more than the event of the race itself.

"It has global scale, unlike a lot of things. And that's huge for us from a business standpoint. There's a huge opportunity for us to partner, to bring the brands to life in the right way. It truly is something that operates nine months of the year. We say, 'Chasing the sun from March until December across the whole world', and so that's hugely appealing as well for us."

Joining the championship as the official energy drink of F1 is no small deal for Sting, given Red Bull's presence on the grid. But for Pandey there is no reason to feel Sting cannot flourish.

"It is obviously an incredible brand there, and they've built an incredible business even within F1, but it's not something that was a consideration *per se* in terms of how we've looked at the partnership with F1," she said.

"Sting is one of the fastest growing brands, if not fastest growing brand, that we have in our portfolio so it's a huge opportunity. There's a lot of interest to expand. And that's where this partnership has just made a huge amount of sense for us from a total PepsiCo standpoint and there's a lot that's similar between the two brands.

"Both of the brands are known for these big moments. Electrifying moments essentially are what brands are known for; it's just made a ton of sense from a partnership perspective to build this brand as we start the relationship with Formula 1."

MARK MANN-BRYANS

Pandey is PepsiCo marketing boss

Gatorade already has history in NASCAR

88
Gatorade

FOCUS ON SPORT/GETTY IMAGES

TUDOR

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What is it that drives someone to greatness? To take on the unknown, venture into the unseen, and dare all? This is the spirit that gave birth to TUDOR, a spirit carried forward by every individual who wears this watch. This is the spirit that drives the **Visa Cash App Racing Bulls** team, season after season. On their wrists are TUDOR watches both robust and precise, putting forth cutting-edge technology, the result of decades of involvement in motor sports. Some are born to follow. Others are born to dare.

BORN TO DARE

INSIDER

There's a better candidate to lead Ferrari than Christian Horner, says Oleg Karpov

"I mean, my Italian is worse than Flavio's English, so how on Earth would that work?" Christian Horner quipped during the Spanish Grand Prix press conference, while sitting next to Flavio Briatore.

There's been a lot of chatter in the Formula 1 paddock during the late spring rounds about potential interest in Horner's services from Ferrari. It's believed that Ferrari chairman John Elkann even approached the Red Bull boss and, when asked whether there was any truth to that rumour, Horner didn't exactly deny it, but made it clear it's not something he is seriously considering.

"Of course, it's always flattering to be associated with other teams," was his response. "But my commitment, 100%, is with Red Bull. It always has been and certainly will be for the long term. There's a bunch of speculation – always in this business – people coming here, going there, whatever. I think people in the team know exactly what the situation is."

Fred Vasseur replaced Mattia Binotto as Ferrari team principal after the squad finished second in the 2022 championship. Losing the title to Horner's Red Bull was deemed unacceptable by the Ferrari board – but since then, under the Frenchman's leadership, the team hasn't surpassed that result. The SF-25, which was a complete overhaul from its predecessor, has not delivered the performance Maranello had hoped for, despite all the optimistic messaging from the team over the winter.

Yet even if Elkann is seriously considering a change, his list of potential replacements should not stop at Horner. Andrea Stella must be on it, too. From the outside, it's hard to pinpoint exactly which of Stella's qualities have enabled McLaren's return to the top. But even from a media perspective, during brief encounters with the Woking squad's Italian team boss, it's enough to notice his meticulous, methodical approach.

"I see Harry, there's some work to do here – look at this," he'd joke with his press officer Harry Bull, sitting down at a table cluttered with a chaotic scatter of mobile phones and old-school voice recorders. He'd then take them one by one and arrange them carefully, forming a perfect semicircle of devices – ensuring their microphones actually pointed towards him for better sound quality (a trick not all journalists know themselves).

He would then turn into more than just a McLaren spokesperson – becoming a guide of sorts, offering not just answers, but context, insights and revelations. Speaking to the media on Friday morning in Monaco, he used an analogy from one of his school teachers to explain the performance swings between McLaren and Red Bull in the earlier races. "I think there's a tendency to compare apples and pears," he explained, when asked why, after the dominant performance in Miami, McLaren suddenly wasn't able to match Max Verstappen's Red Bull at Imola. "When I was at school the teacher always said, 'Don't compare apples and pears, make sure you are specific, analytical, precise in how you use information.'"

He went on to explain how meaningless it is to compare the two circuits – which, in his simple analogy, belong to entirely different fruit categories – and predicted that Ferrari would be McLaren's main challenger in Monaco, despite pessimistic assessments from that team's own drivers. He turned out to be spot on with that prediction, too – which almost suggests he knows more about Ferrari's strengths than Ferrari itself...

Elkann doesn't attend these round tables, but he surely has deeper background knowledge on Stella, who was part of Ferrari during the most dominant era in its history. He joined the team in 2001, straight from university. He soon became Michael Schumacher's race engineer, then moved up the ladder before switching to McLaren. And although he hasn't been at Maranello for over a decade, he knows the team's inner workings.

> ***"He'd become a guide of sorts, offering not just answers, but context, insights and revelations"***

His results at McLaren – and more importantly, the progress made over the past three years – should already be enough to consider him a serious candidate without the need for further proof. It was under his leadership that McLaren went from scoring 59 points in the first 10 races of 2023 to winning seven races and chalking up 374 points from the first 10 in 2025. That record alone is more than enough reason for anyone – not just Elkann – to view Stella as the prime candidate to reorganise a struggling operation. And Ferrari clearly qualifies as one, needing someone capable of meticulously putting all the right pieces in the right places.

Plus, of course, he's fluent in Italian.

MASTERING
ENERGY
brembo
Today we pause to celebrate
our first 50 years in motorsports.
Tomorrow, we set course
for many more to come.
50
brembo
RACING

ZAWRZEL/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

F1 meets Hollywood: will the movie bring new fans on board?

INSIDER

F1 goes box office – and that was the point, says Mark Mann-Bryans

Talk to anyone involved in *F1: The Movie* and they will explain that the film was made to bring fresh eyes onto Formula 1 while at least paying lip service to the existing fanbase. It is a balancing act and one that, quite possibly, would never have been achieved even if the talented array of filmmakers had hit the mark. Brad Pitt leads the way in what will surely be a summer blockbuster regardless of how reviews go, but – as someone reading Autosport magazine – you are probably in the latter category of the target audience for F1's eponymous film.

First of all, it should be noted that visually, the movie is stunning. Watching in IMAX to get the full-frontal attack of the senses makes the racing scenes incredibly immersive, with some of the technology used to capture footage taking years to perfect. It was worth the wait. The racing is visceral and inserts the characters of returning veteran Sonny Hayes (Pitt) and the young upstart Joshua Pearce (Damson Idris) right into the heat of the battle against their real-life F1 rivals.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that the race scenes steal the show, with Lewis Hamilton brought on board early in the process to ensure the realism is there – although even the seven-time world champion was seemingly overruled when some of the action plays out the way it does.

That race footage, for the large part, could be the only moments in the film that capture the imagination of longstanding F1 fans but, as producer Jerry Bruckheimer explains: "The authenticity is important, but the story is also really important. We have to tell a compelling story that rivets an audience. The racing creates drama, but you have to have the kind of wonderful character and journey of this character through an over two-hour movie."

But there, too, the film falls short – at least for this writer and some of my colleagues who were given a special screening ahead of the Canadian Grand Prix – with the storyline around the motor racing often pushing the boundaries of realism and the arc away from the circuit lacking in substance. The love story fails to flicker, and building fully formed characters is difficult when you're showing off an entirely fictional F1 team – APXGP – while also putting in as much track action as possible for the 'hero' moments such a Hollywood epic craves.

We meet the APXGP team owner, team principal, director, chief mechanic, mechanic and technical director (Pitt's love interest Kate McKenna, played by Kerry Condon), all vying for screen time and to leave a lasting impression on viewers. Few achieve it.

There are many aspects of Hayes's backstory and his remarkable rise back to F1 that stretch the realism to its limits – again, unless you are coming at this as a complete novice to the series – with certain tactics, outcomes and racecraft straight from the realms of the silver screen rather than Silverstone. However, maybe that is the point, and one that could potentially be missed by those of an F1 persuasion. Those who watch it with completely fresh eyes may then be tempted to tune in to the next grand prix. "Now it's our job to make sure that all the people will stay connected to us," says F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali. "That's what I see."

> ***"Those who watch it with completely fresh eyes may be tempted to tune in to the next GP"***

If that happens, and F1 can track that as a metric, then there is no doubt that it will be seen as a success by the series, Warner Bros and Apple Films – and the sort of issues laid out here will be deemed irrelevant.

F1 was once a closed shop, racing around the world while giving very few a peak behind the curtain into life in the paddock. That changed when Netflix launched *Drive to Survive*, capturing a new audience – especially in the United States – and now *F1: The Movie* is looking to follow suit, with the American market once again key to judging the outcome. If it does land, who knows? Maybe we could even see a sequel in the coming years. F2, anyone?

GRAND PRIX GUIDE

THE
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AND
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FOR
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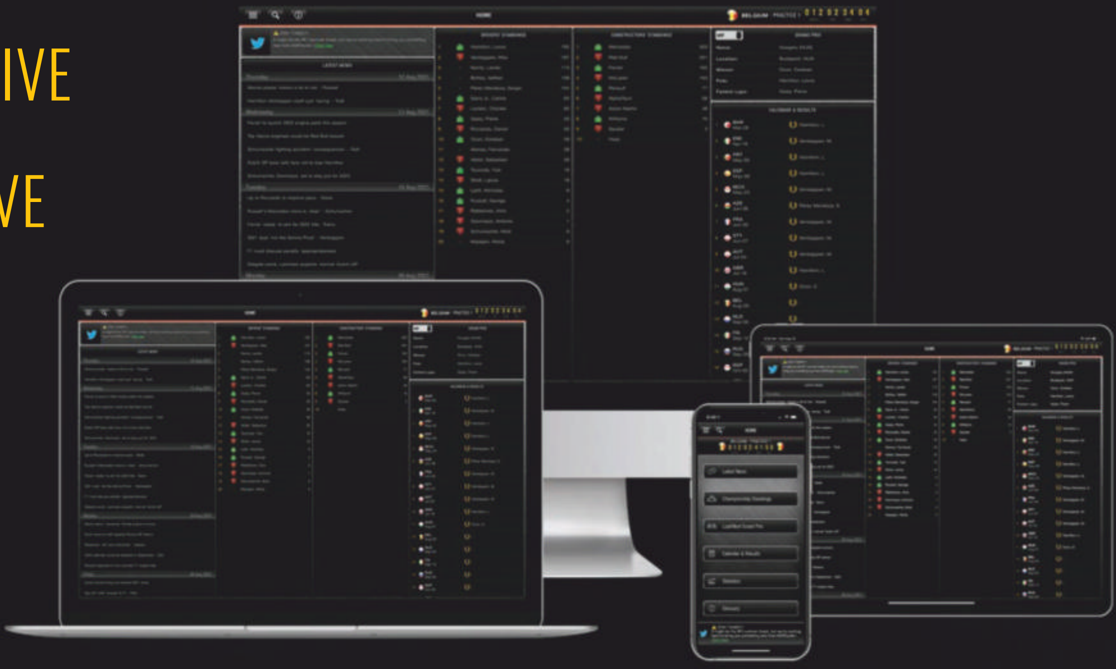

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FORMULA ONE LICENSING BV OWNS THE FORMULA ONE TRADEMARKS

INSIDER

Pat Symonds explains the point in F1's aero numbers

I was recently asked what was meant by 'points' of downforce. One often hears technical directors interviewed on television saying that after a collision resulting in body damage a car may have lost a certain number of points of downforce, but how much is this and what effect could it have on performance?

First, let's examine how we measure downforce. In the context of a Formula 1 wind tunnel test, a 60% scale model of the car is run in the tunnel at a speed of 50 metres per second (about 110mph), these numbers being the maximum model size and air speed that the regulations allow. A balance, which is effectively a very accurate force measuring device, will measure the aerodynamic loads that the model produces, which might, in the case of downforce, be in the region of 4kN. A kilonewton (kN) is a measure of force roughly equal to 225lb or 100kg. The real car, however, on the circuit, may produce over 12kN at this speed, but as the downforce increases with speed, at 180mph the same car would produce over 34kN.

What this means is that we can't express downforce in Newtons as the number would depend on the scale of the device we were measuring it on and the airspeed at which we were measuring. To get round this problem, engineers like to express downforce in a non-dimensional form. What this means is that they can express the downforce, or indeed the drag, as a number that has no units but which, when used as a coefficient in a simple formula, will yield the downforce at any given speed or scale. This coefficient is generally known as the lift coefficient and abbreviated to $\mathcal{C}_l$ or sometimes $\mathcal{C}_z$ and, as we are dealing with downforce, is negative.

So far so good, but unfortunately the simple formula used to calculate the downforce contains a term that relates to a reference area. Normally the frontal area of the car is used. Why this presents a problem is that different teams use different values for the frontal area. Some use a reasonably exact number of 1.47 square metres, some approximate this to 1.5 and others say it's only a number so use 1.0. When comparing your own results between tests, of course this doesn't matter, but if you're comparing the lift coefficient between a team using 1.5 square metres with another using 1.0, there will be a considerable difference between them.

So, let's consider a team is using a value of 1.5 square metres for their frontal area, then a current 2025 car would have a lift coefficient of around –5.5 (depending on the exact conditions considered). This is the number that the team's aerodynamicists will be trying to improve. This is not easy, particularly with a mature set of regulations. To improve that number from –5.5 to –5.6 would take many hundreds of wind tunnel experiments, each one yielding a tiny fraction of improvement.

We therefore need a way of expressing these smaller improvements with a convenient measure in much the same way that we would not describe the size of our kitchen in fractions of a kilometre but instead use metres and decimal points of a metre. Aerodynamicists therefore split the lift and drag coefficients into hundredths and call each one of these a point. So, if our coefficient of lift is improved from –5.50 to –5.51 (negative, remember, as we are interested in downforce), we can say it has improved by a point.

So now we can think about what effect a loss of some points of downforce, brought about perhaps by damage, can have on the car's performance. Of course, the answer will vary from circuit to circuit. Some are very sensitive to downforce while others are less so. It's not hard to imagine that a circuit like Hungaroring, with lots of medium-speed corners, will reward high downforce more than, say, Baku, which is mainly straights and low speed corners. However, if we take an average, we could say that a loss of 10 points of downforce would equate to a lap time increase of around three tenths of a second.

> *"To get round this problem, engineers like to express downforce in a non-dimensional form"*

So what level of damage might lead to a loss of 10 points of downforce? That's a much harder question to answer as each surface of the car is designed to work in harmony with the others. For some the interaction may be weak and damage will not lead to significant performance loss. For other areas, what may seem trivial damage can be catastrophic. So next time a technical director blames lack of performance on a 30-point downforce loss due to damage, you just have to believe them!

Want to ask Pat a tech question for a future issue? Let us know on autosport@autosport.com

The Twelve in titanium: a case of precious mettle.

CHRONOMETER
8
SWISS MADE

Grade 2 Titanium is a commercially pure form of a special, almost magical metal. It is stronger than steel but lighter. It won't rust, so it's ideal for in-the-pool incursions. With the right know-how, it can be shaped and faceted into something rare. Unique even, like **The Twelve**'s dodecahedron bezel. Or its contour-hugging integrated bracelet. Other cool characteristics are its warmth to the touch and luscious lustre. More sepia than silver, in the right hands it can be brushed, sandblasted and polished into something truly precious. Like time itself. Which is why we use it to protect (and show off)a super-reliable, chronometer grade Swiss movement.

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View the watch

George Russell's Mercedes leads at the start of last year's GP...

MORGESE/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

...while in 1948 it was Reg Parnell in a Maserati 4CLT

PICTURE POST/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

F1 BACK TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Silverstone's place in Formula 1 history endows it with a special significance, no more so than for Britain's four grand prix drivers. We examine their prospects at home over the following pages

Seventy-five years and a couple of months ago, a windswept former airfield near Towcester held the first race counting towards the world championship for drivers. Formula 1 had only recently taken on that title – it had previously been known as 'Formula A' – and yet many of the cars competing in the category predated it, since racing in the immediate post-war era was a make-do-and-mend affair that leaned heavily on cars built in the 1930s.

Arrive at Silverstone today and you would have to send a drone up to see the evidence of its wartime role, but one thing remains a constant reminder of the site's history: the wind, which made this plateau such an attractive location for an airfield. RAF Silverstone enjoyed a service life of just two years, as a training ground for Vickers Wellington bomber crews, before the end of the Second World War rendered it redundant and the gates were locked.

Not securely enough for local residents and former flyboys who craved a level of risk and stimulation now absent from their lives. Silverstone's origin myth enshrines Maurice Geoghegan, a resident of the nearby village, as the one who identified its potential as a race track – or at least an area where he could exercise his new Frazer Nash without having his collar felt for speeding on a public road. Word eventually reached the Royal Automobile Club, which was looking for a new venue since Brooklands and Donington Park had been rendered unusable, and the circuit in London's Crystal Palace park was considered unsuitable.

The first RAC International Grand Prix in October 1948 used a curious layout based on two of the three runways, linked by the perimeter roads. For safety reasons this was quickly dropped in favour of using the perimeter roads alone, and the race moved to May in the hope of better weather. The fundamentals of this layout prevailed until 2010, when it was adapted to include a new infield section.

While the war may have ended in 1945, Silverstone has been the object of many battles in the years since – not least with former F1 'ringmaster' Bernie Ecclestone, who apparently had an avid dislike of the facility and those who ran it. Since the present commercial rights holders forced Ecclestone into retirement there has been rather less ire from that direction. Indeed, the British GP at Silverstone is now held up by Liberty Media as an exemplar of what these events should be like – not just a race, but a full weekend of entertainment with a festival atmosphere.

The British crowd is known to be knowledgeable as well as enthusiastic, but that doesn't mean it isn't partisan – so this year passions are likely to be running high, with at least one British driver in a very good position to win…

STUART CODLING

TIMETABLE

FRIDAY 4 JULY

0850-0935	F3 free practice
1000-1045	F2 free practice
1230-1330	F1 FP1
1400-1430	F3 qualifying
1500-1530	F2 qualifying
1600-1700	F1 FP2
1710-1725	Historic F1 car demonstration
1745-1830	F4 free practice

SATURDAY 5 JULY

0755-0820	F4 qualifying
0900	F3 sprint race
0955-1010	Historic F1 car demonstration
1130-1230	F1 FP3
1315	F2 sprint race
1500-1600	F1 qualifying
1645	F4 race one

SUNDAY 6 JULY

0820	F4 race two
0930	F3 feature race
1105	F2 feature race
1220-1235	Historic F1 car demonstration
1500	**British Grand Prix**

Can Norris go one better than his previous best Silverstone finish?

McLAREN; EMMANUEL PHAETON/UNSPLASH

McLAREN

LANDO NORRIS

Patience has become a way of life for long-time McLaren enthusiasts. Nine years between wins 182 and 183; 26 years between constructors' championship trophies; and as for a first drivers' title since Lewis Hamilton got it over the line by a single point at a wet Interlagos in 2008, the wait goes on. Lando Norris emerged as a genuine title contender last season, marking another waypoint on his journey to becoming a Silverstone crowd favourite. Seizing the moment to (briefly) lead the 2023 British Grand Prix demonstrated his candidacy for the top tier and, even though it didn't work out for him last year, Lewis Hamilton's win against the run of recent form compensated somewhat for Norris being defeated by Max Verstappen.

McLaren's resurgence, and Norris's new-found confidence, was just what the wider Formula 1 ecosystem needed as ennui began to creep in after two and a half seasons of dominance by Verstappen and Red Bull. Coming immediately after Lando and Max had banged wheels at the Red Bull Ring, the British GP weekend felt like an upping of the stakes. Further clashes were to come as Verstappen ultimately went 10 grands prix without winning, setting up an exciting title run-in where Norris fell short. This season the narrative has shifted again and there are three drivers in this battle – four if you count George Russell, whose gradual slip into fringe candidacy status was interrupted by his Canadian GP win.

At the beginning of the season it was generally expected that McLaren would have one of the best cars on the grid, challenged closely by Red Bull and Ferrari. What emerged was a picture of McLaren enjoying a margin of superiority at most tracks, having developed its car wisely over the winter. Some of that was concealed in the wet at the season opener in Melbourne but, as F1 visited some of the warmer environs on the calendar, McLaren's ability to keep Pirelli's sensitive rear tyres in the right temperature 'window' proved decisive.

By contrast Ferrari, having developed its car into one of the strongest on the grid in the final races of last season, hasn't carried that momentum forward. Red Bull, meanwhile, has contrived to make its car even more difficult to drive – and by the second round of the season was following its usual *modus operandi* of blaming the second driver for not being in Verstappen's league. So a competitive picture has emerged of the drivers' championship battle being predominantly fought out by the two McLaren team-mates, Norris and Oscar Piastri, while Verstappen maxes out his points take at those tracks where his RB21 is competitive.

Verstappen has been helped in this objective by Pirelli succeeding in making its tyres less prone to 'graining' and thermal degradation, making many races one-stop affairs even when F1's tyre supplier had nominated compounds a step softer than last year. This, and convergence of performance adding to the difficulty of overtaking, has set up scenarios such as that which played out in Japan, where the McLaren duo underperformed in qualifying and Verstappen 'occupied the crease' (to borrow a cricketing term) to win the race after getting to the first corner first.

After spinning in the wet in his home round and finishing ninth, Piastri has been more consistent than his team-mate and less discombobulated by the MCL39's snappiness when pushed. He rebooted his season with victory in China and then three consecutive wins in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Miami to annex the championship lead. He was helped in this cause by Norris making a proverbial dog's dinner of the Bahrain round, qualifying five places behind Piastri and then picking up a costly penalty for a startline infringement. The papaya

»

AGE 25

SILVERSTONE GP STARTS 7

BEST SILVERSTONE GP FINISH 2ND

2025 CHAMPIONSHIP POS 2ND (176 PTS)

Norris enjoyed brief stint in the lead at Silverstone in 2023

J SUTTON/SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Beaten into third place by Verstappen in last year's race

MAUGER/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

Celebrations with team boss Stella and Piastri

LANDO
P1
OSCAR
P3

ILLMAN/GETTY IMAGES

2025 Monaco pole position converted into race victory

MARTINI/SOPA IMAGES/LIGHTROCKET/GETTY IMAGES pitwall will be relieved that the *sturm und drang* has been going on between Norris's ears rather than playing out between the McLaren drivers, although he's facing increasing pressure following a string of mistakes culminating in hitting his team-mate in Montreal.

What adds an extra dimension to Norris's appeal – to the younger generation, if perhaps not to older aficionados less inclined to engage in such dialogues – is his heart-on-sleeve openness. This facet of his personality has been very much on display this season because, while McLaren continues to have the fastest car in most circumstances, some of the developments that added performance have come at the cost of 'feel' as the MCL39 approaches its limits. By and large Piastri has done a better job of executing during qualifying, while Norris has found small mistakes compounding into larger ones as he chases lap time. As a result, more than once he has cut a dispirited figure in post-qualifying or in post-race media sessions, where his tendency towards self-flagellation is at its rawest 'in the moment'. He's even cast doubt on his ability to drive.

There are those who watch these kind of displays and scent weakness, particularly in comparison with Verstappen's stereotypically alpha-male robustness. And yet what matters is what works – and in being open about the negative thoughts that sometimes trouble him, Norris is exposing and working through issues common among many elite sportspeople. It's just that most of them repress those neuroses and save them for their autobiographies.

"It's tricky," he says. "Sometimes you don't [dispel the negatives], even when you want to be thinking of all the positives and things like that. But I think what I've learned more to do is turn those thoughts into productive things. Turn them into ways to improve, to understand things. Turn them into positive attributes, I guess, rather than letting them bring me down as much.

"I'm sure a lot of people have similar things. Everyone has those great days. Everyone has bad days. But yeah, I don't need other people to tell me things. I have my own team, my own people around me who tell me when I'm doing good and when I'm not. And that's all I really need. I don't need other people, and I don't need to listen or look at anything else. I only care about those people who are closest to me, who understand me. But also, having them around – like having a good team around me – is probably one of the most important things because I still love those trickier days. But, yeah, the main thing is understanding them and learning how to turn them into productive, positive things."

"I HAVE MY OWN PEOPLE AROUND ME WHO TELL ME WHEN I'M DOING GOOD AND WHEN I'M NOT"

In terms of that support network he speaks of, it's been noticeable that Norris has brought his family to more races this season. Perhaps more germane to the immediate task of delivering the goods on track, as opposed to dealing with what happens on it, Norris has been leaning in further to the expertise of his engineers. Earlier in the season he spoke of the difficulty in finding his rhythm in the MCL39; team principal Andrea Stella alluded to it having a slightly 'numb' feeling as it approached its limits, so Norris was having to second-guess his instincts, introducing time-sapping inertia.

An effective workaround has been more intensive preparation in the simulator for each round, combined with more proactive communication while qualifying sessions are on. This was manifest in Monaco, where race engineer Will Joseph gave continuous feedback over the radio about the effectiveness of braking efforts and cornering lines... and the result was pole position by a tenth of a second from Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. A small margin but, at a track like this, a significant one.

In fact, though other teams (chiefly Red Bull) have complained about the aero-elasticity of the MCL39's front and rear wings, and the supposed use of phase-change materials in the rear brake assembly, marginal gains have underpinned McLaren's advances this season. So it's fitting that Norris has taken the same approach to improve his own mind management during qualifying laps.

Flexi-wings and heat-management trickery went unproved, and the implementation of new front-wing deflection tests at the recent Spanish GP provided an egg-on-face moment for those who had been predicting it would bring a massive change in the pecking order. Perhaps most irksomely for Red Bull, which had been lobbying for the new tests to be implemented earlier, Verstappen was three tenths off Piastri's pole position in qualifying – a perhaps unexpected margin at a circuit whose characteristics should have favoured the RB21.

"There were a lot of complaints about our car, and they introduced this TD [technical directive on the front wings] and changed nothing," says Norris. "The team have done a very good job to just give us a good all-round car. There's still places where we're vulnerable, especially in qualifying as it gets very close. They've been split by hundredths and thousandths, and there hasn't been smooth sailing for us in every single one. So, I think that will be the case in future ones. It's clear we just have the best car on average, and we still seem stronger in the race. Although, it's clear that the others are catching up. We just need to keep our heads down and keep working hard."

It all adds up to a season that continues to defy any attempt to establish certainties. McLaren is usually the fastest in terms of race pace, particularly in hotter conditions, but the margins aren't always decisive. Red Bull thrives on circuits like Silverstone, where fast corners predominate, but its rear-tyre management isn't quite as good as McLaren's. Ferrari and Mercedes can be there or thereabouts in qualifying but tend to fall off on race pace – unless it's cold, in which conditions Merc's W16 thrives. So McLaren, at least, will be hoping the great British summer delivers a scorcher...

STUART CODLING

Russell will be counting on it being a bit parky for his Mercedes to flourish

MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG

MERCEDES

GEORGE RUSSELL

If anyone's hoping for the Great British summer to reach last year's chilly extremes, it's George Russell. Last year's less-than-tepid conditions at the British Grand Prix were more befitting that of an April club meeting, rather than the heights of July, but the dull-and-damp aura that suffused Silverstone rather played into Mercedes' hands. Then, it was Lewis Hamilton who claimed his first victory since losing the title in 2021, while Russell was denied the opportunity to play in the rain, ironically, due to his own water leak.

A year later, Mercedes retains strengths in colder conditions, a trait that tips into the realms of weakness when the temperatures start to rise. As any person who resides in the United Kingdom will know intimately, it could go either way when the circus makes its yearly stop-over in Northamptonshire.

Since Hamilton's departure to Ferrari, Russell has assumed the team leader mantle with aplomb – although the man himself might argue that he was regularly beating the seven-time champion last year.

"At the end of 2021, Lewis was the hottest driver on the grid," Russell told our sister publication *Motorsport-Total*. "Nobody would have expected anybody to beat him as his team-mate in Mercedes. I entered there, and from race one I was performing. I fully backed myself.

"The reputation he had is the same of which Max [Verstappen] has. Nobody believes Max is touchable. That was the same view everyone had against Lewis. People forget Lewis came in as a rookie and was on the podium in his first six races with a two-time world champion as his team-mate. So that says a lot."

Mercedes has helped the situation with its development of a less-troubled car for 2025, albeit simultaneously blessed and cursed with its rapid tyre warm-up attribute, and Russell has led the charge as new team-mate Andrea Kimi Antonelli learns his trade in the sister machine. Versus the same point in his 2024 season, podium placings have been much more forthcoming; yet breaking the deadlock set by the triumvirate of Oscar Piastri, Lando Norris and Verstappen has proven to be a tough ask.

On qualifying pace, the Mercedes W16 can be a match for the McLaren MCL39 and Red Bull RB21 – on its day, at least. Russell usually tends to keep well clear of the rank-and-file on the rest of the grid and situate himself among the usual suspects at the front of the order, but the prevailing winds across the race distance generally blow open a void between the McLarens and everyone else.

In Mercedes' case, that knife-edge thermal management costs it much more on a Sunday, although Russell has been able to coax strong results from the car – even when the chips are down. Even so, a podium position is effectively a race win for anyone not dressed in papaya.

"It's not quite straightforward," Russell says of the W16's foibles. "It's just isolating temperature, track temperature. It's also a function of how smooth the Tarmac is, and how soft the tyres are. At Saudi, we did the majority of the race on the hard, C3 tyre. Imola was the C4 tyre. Bahrain, it was pretty hot, that was the C2 tyre. There's never one reason. But the strength is there.

"And the pace we showed in Imola – it wasn't actually too dissimilar to what we saw in Miami. But Miami, everything was very smooth, and things went for us. And that's when we got on the podium. [At Imola], probably without the safety cars and VSCs, we would, I'd say, probably have finished fifth, which is the same as what we showed in Jeddah. On a good day, we were third. On a bad day, we were P5, P6." »

AGE 27

SILVERSTONE GP STARTS 7

BEST SILVERSTONE GP FINISH 5TH

2025 CHAMPIONSHIP POS 4TH (136 PTS)

Russell started on the front row in Bahrain and came home second

MASON/GETTY IMAGES

"Very smooth" progress to Miami podium in May

DUNBAR/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

Russell's last victory at Silverstone was in GP3 in 2017

J SUTTON/SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Caught up in Zhou Guanyu's shunt at the start in 2022

GONGORA/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

Russell is simply not content to chase podiums and notional victories, he wants the real thing. The thing is, he's never had the opportunity to stand on an F1 podium at his home race; after three seasons in uncompetitive Williams machinery, Russell has suffered two retirements at home since moving to Mercedes (one in 2024, the other in 2022 when tangled up in Zhou Guanyu's car-flipping first-turn accident) and managed a high score of fifth in 2023. You'd have to go back to his title-winning 2018 F2 season for his last brace of podium results at Silverstone, and the 2017 GP3 feature race win for Russell's last visit to the top step of the podium on home ground.

Russell benefited from Piastri's misfortune amid the sudden downpour at the Australian GP to collect third place in the season opener behind the duelling pair of Norris and Verstappen. And, after nudging his way between the two McLarens in qualifying for the Chinese GP a week later, Russell's attempts to cover Norris off at the start could not delay his fellow Briton for too long. He eventually had to be satisfied with another third after being gazumped on the opening lap, although Norris's failing brake pedal did offer a faint sniff of retribution in the latter stages of the race.

There was little opportunity for Russell to find a third consecutive podium in Japan, where the race largely finished in starting order among the top 10. Nonetheless, he'd ladled the pressure on Charles Leclerc throughout as he got into a groove in the cooler conditions, carrying Antonelli with him in his wake.

Until Russell's victory last time out in the Canadian GP, his first success since Las Vegas last November, Bahrain had been the high-water mark of his season. If you were feeling particularly uncharitable, it could be suggested that Norris's qualifying misfires rather did a lot of the heavy lifting behind Russell's front-row effort (prior to a penalty), but polewinner Piastri was only 0.168 seconds clear of the Mercedes driver on the Saturday.

"TICKING OFF A FIRST F1 PODIUM ON HOME SOIL HAS TO BE THE MINIMUM TARGET"

What was more impressive was Russell's retention of the runner-up spot in the GP, despite an ever-growing clutch of electrical glitches in the car. His car's transponder initially went on the blink, before his brake-by-wire systems and steering wheel also began to suffer a series of faults. Grappling with limited information and a long brake pedal, Russell nonetheless managed to fend off a recovering Norris.

But, as Mercedes wilted in the Saudi Arabian heat, Russell was unable to follow up on that in Jeddah. Regardless, clinching fifth in a race of toil was not too terrible a result, indicating the improvement that Mercedes had found over the off-season. He also claimed another podium in Miami, despite being upstaged by rookie Antonelli in the sprint and grand prix qualifying sessions.

The hot-conditions pitfalls gaped wider at Imola, and Russell managed to fend off Carlos Sainz's Williams to clinch seventh in a tough afternoon for Mercedes. This precipitated a difficult European trilogy, with the Brackley squad going scoreless in Monaco after Russell's car conked out in qualifying; it shut down after he ran over a bump at Beau Rivage. Forced into lockstep with the rest of the lower midfield as the teams ahead backed up the pack to build gaps for their lead cars to pit into, Russell chose to cop a penalty rather than put up with it any longer and passed Alex Albon off the road at the Nouvelle Chicane. A drive through the pitlane served as penance for that rather blatant infraction, but Russell felt that the punishment was completely worth the joy he'd got out of a few clean-air laps of the Monaco circuit.

Did that bely his prim-and-proper, statesmanlike standing as a Grand Prix Drivers' Association director? To a degree, yes – although he chose to smooth it over with his explanation that Monaco allowed such play to be rewarded.

As the summer months have prevailed, Mercedes' weaknesses look set to rear their heads either side of the summer break – although, almost counterintuitively, this coincided with the team's most prosperous patch last year. Three of the four wins that the team accrued over 2024 arrived at the heights of summer, albeit through perhaps fortuitous means; the Austrian GP was defined through the coalescence of Verstappen and Norris at Turn 3, and Russell picked up the pieces.

Let's not forget that Russell also crossed the line first at last year's Belgian GP, but was stripped of his win when his car was found to be underweight before the fuel had been fully drained from the car. It was suggested at the time that Russell's adherence to a one-stop strategy, a tactical call he'd made himself, had just nudged him over the line following the marginal weight loss in his tyres. Russell's own gallows-humour take on his disqualification was that he should have had an extra steak with dinner.

To take his first British GP win, Russell will need the good fortune he may feel is owed to him after that Spa weekend. The conditions and the circumstances may well need to align to yield home-race glory, and any skew towards the hotter end of the British summertime spectrum will make the task far more arduous.

Conversely, should the clouds loom overhead and chilly winds whip around the Silverstone bowl, then Russell might well fancy his chances. Ticking off a first F1 podium on home soil has to be the minimum target.

Now he's been able to chalk up his first win of 2025, Russell's market value will continue in the ascendancy as he and Mercedes close out talks for a contract extension. That said, if the German marque's 2026 powertrain is as advanced as rumour suggests, Russell's probably going to want to stick around for a shot at title glory.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

Hamilton's mojo needs just the lift that Silverstone's fans provide in abundance

FERRARI

FERRARI

LEWIS HAMILTON

Sir Lewis Hamilton has been energising the British Grand Prix crowd since the weekend of 10-11 June 2006. Over the course of two mesmerising days, what had been a diminished crowd – 'Schumacher fatigue' had long been acting as a drag on ticket sales, and football's World Cup added to the distractions – feasted on Lewis's brilliance in two dramatic GP2 races on the Formula 1 support bill.

The most exquisite moment came when Hamilton took advantage of championship nemesis Nelson Piquet Jr's battle with Clivio Piccione to slipstream them both and come out ahead as they went three-wide into the right-hander at Maggotts. "I think Lewis killed Piquet this day," is how Hamilton's ART GP team principal Fred Vasseur would later recall this as a significant momentum shift in the title battle. Nineteen years and seven F1 world championships later, Vasseur is Hamilton's boss again – this time at Ferrari. Sadly, it's fair to say outcomes have yet to match up to expectations.

When Hamilton announced his departure from Mercedes early last year, the response from the paddock and the fan community naturally divided according to their loyalties. While the 'Hamfosi' saw the move to Ferrari as a much-needed opportunity for a new challenge with a great brand after Mercedes had slid into the doldrums, Hamilton's detractors sneered at what they saw as a spent force 'cashing out' via one final big earner.

The latter is a rather absurd premise since Hamilton is not only hugely rich already, on account of being F1's top-earning driver for many years, but he has long since reached a point where using his star power for the greater good has overtaken wealth accumulation as his off-track focus. He launched his Mission 44 initiative in 2021 to help the push towards a more inclusive future for young people around the world, and last month met senior UK government ministers to discuss educational initiatives. Mission 44 also recently announced a partnership with Ferrari title sponsor HP to provide young people with access to technology, training, digital skills and mentorship.

On track Hamilton remains as committed as ever, but F1's new ground-effect era has not provided many opportunities for his skill set. His phenomenal feel under braking, and his ability to live with rear-end instability, have been nullified by a generation of cars that are heavier and more stiffly sprung. To protect the sensitive rear tyres, teams habitually dial in understeer, which Hamilton abhors. These factors would have militated against Hamilton continuing his phenomenal championship run – six world championships between 2014 and 2020 – even if Mercedes hadn't spectacularly dropped the ball in the ground-effect era. Time and again, the Silver Arrows have failed to take flight; peaky, overly sensitive aerodynamics and a tendency to over-work the rear axle have made successive Mercs since 2022 difficult to set up and prone to vast swings in performance depending on track conditions.

Last year's British GP was one of those now-rare moments where the Mercedes technical package gelled to enable George Russell to secure pole and Hamilton to run to victory after Russell was sidelined by an engine cooling issue. But Lewis's critics continued to point out that qualifying, once his strong suit, was now an area in which he was regularly bettered by his team-mate.

Statistically that was the case with Russell, and so it has come to pass again in *Rosso Corsa* with Charles Leclerc. The contrast between Hamilton's artfully curated maiden appearance at Ferrari's Maranello factory and his downbeat demeanour during the majority of the grand prix weekends this season has been striking.

Ferrari finished last season having transformed its »

AGE 40

SILVERSTONE GP STARTS 19

BEST SILVERSTONE GP FINISH 1ST (X9)

2025 CHAMPIONSHIP POS 6TH (79 PTS)

Spain was a low point, finishing sixth while Leclerc made the podium

VALLS/URBANANDSPORT/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

Everything came together for last year's fairytale Silverstone win

ASLIM/ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES

LEWIS
BOX
BOX
FOSTER'S

Hamilton was a sensation in GP2 across the weekend in 2006

FORMULA 1/FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED/GETTY IMAGES

Buoyed by Ferrari fans while trying to close the gap to Leclerc

M SUTTON/FORMULA 1/GETTY IMAGES

SF-24 car into one of the most competitive on the grid. A habit in previous seasons of bringing performance upgrades that didn't yield the expected results appeared to have been cured; Ferrari shut down its wind tunnel last summer to replace the conventional steel-belt rolling road with a surface that more closely approximated asphalt. Subsequent updates included a new floor and upper bodywork for September's Italian GP, followed by a new front wing in Singapore, all of which appeared to deliver on Ferrari's stated aim of making the car more raceable and friendlier to its tyres. Until that point, the SF-24 had often been quick in qualifying, but its drivers went to the grid knowing they were likely to go backwards in the race.

Thus it was widely accepted that Ferrari would carry on this momentum to the SF-25, especially since it had invested such effort into developments that could carry over to the new season. Reality delivered a brusque response in the wet season-opening Australian GP, where Leclerc finished eighth and Hamilton was 10th. Lewis's own verdict, that it "went worse than I thought it would go", was something of a statement of the obvious. He only looked in contention for a podium finish for a brief moment in the final stages of the race, when he stayed out on slick tyres while others pitted for intermediates as more rain threatened. The downpour proved more intense and widespread than Ferrari expected – or had communicated to Hamilton – so he eventually had to capitulate, and engaged in the first of what would prove to be many rather tetchy dialogues with race engineer Riccardo Adami.

In an era where the news agenda is driven by social media shareability and the requirement to crystallise every situation into a soundbite, the occasionally awkward exchanges between Hamilton and Adami have become a self-fulfilling phenomenon. F1 TV is alert to the slightest hint of rancour or misunderstanding and broadcasts every scrap (sometimes out of context), which then provides fodder for endless memes, TikTok videos and clickbait 'assets'. Vasseur clearly finds this maddening, especially when it inevitably becomes a go-to topic in post-race media sessions.

> **"HAMILTON HAS BEEN LUCKY TO GET WITHIN THREE TENTHS OF HIS TEAM-MATE WHEN IT COUNTS"**

Hamilton worked with his previous engineer, Peter Bonnington, for over a decade at Mercedes and the pair grew to understand the best means of communicating with each other. Adami's previous two drivers were Sebastian Vettel and Carlos Sainz – both of whom liked a continuous flow of information from the pitwall about where they were relative to the cars around them, so they could 'strategise' by themselves. By his own admission, Hamilton dislikes a running commentary. "I'm not one that likes a lot of information in-race, unless I ask for it," he said after the Australian GP.

It's clear that Adami hasn't yet found a 'sweet spot' where he can be sure how much data to pass on and when; this, plus the fact that he's communicating in a second language, gives a halting quality to his side of the dialogue that could be interpreted as a lack of confidence. Contrast that with Bonnington's delivery, which resembles an airline pilot telling their passengers that cruising altitude has been reached, no turbulence is expected, and there is a fine view of Paris from the right-hand side of the aircraft. Even then, Hamilton was occasionally moved to snap at 'Bono' to cut the chat.

Alongside this somewhat distracting soap opera, Hamilton's season has continued to heap sorrow upon disappointment. The sprint race win in China briefly lifted hopes, only for them to be dashed the following day when he was excluded for excessive 'plank' wear and Leclerc was also struck from the record for being underweight. Naturally this led to questions over the slickness of Ferrari's race operations as well as the basic competitiveness of the car itself; it certainly indicated how close to the margins it was having to run the SF-25.

Every team on the grid has had to ponder the timing of when to pivot towards developing all-new cars for the incoming 2026 ruleset. Ferrari has been industriously trying to improve the SF-25 nonetheless, adding a new floor as early as Bahrain in April, then revised underfloor detailing along with further bodywork modifications for the Emilia Romagna GP at Imola. At the time of writing another new floor is due to go on at the Red Bull Ring, and new rear suspension at Silverstone.

What's been especially damaging to Ferrari in general is the SF-25's deficit in peak performance. It's believed that Ferrari has had to accept an unwanted level of set-up compromise, particularly at the rear, to avoid the issue of plank wear. This has had a disproportionate effect on slow-corner performance and held back the car most in qualifying, where it has struggled to 'switch on' the tyres on both axles. Given the compression of the field this season, small time losses there equate to many places on the grid, giving the drivers too much to do on Sundays. It's hoped that the combined floor and rear-suspension update will do away with this need for compromise.

While Leclerc has often said after qualifying that he has extracted the SF-25's maximum, Hamilton has been lucky to get within three tenths of his team-mate when it counts. He's put it down to not being fully accustomed to Ferrari's control mechanisms and baked-in performance quirks, which are at odds with the 'muscle memory' he developed for the Mercedes control interfaces. The Ferrari's more abrupt engine-braking characteristics have also been a problem. He reached the nadir of his season in Spain, where he laboured to sixth place despite outqualifying Leclerc, who finished on the podium. "Where do you go from here?" he was asked in the post-race 'pen'. "Home" came the response.

To quote a popular hit from Hamilton's youth, the only way is up – he'll certainly be hoping for better in front of his home crowd, even if he doesn't surpass his record of nine British Grand Prix wins.

STUART CODLING

First home grand prix is a big deal for Bearman and his family

HAAS

HAAS

OLLIE BEARMAN

Of the quartet of British drivers preparing for Silverstone, Ollie Bearman is the only one not to have tasted a Formula 1 grand prix on home soil. The Haas driver only turned 20 in May, but will line up on the grid with plenty of good memories of days spent at the circuit as both a fan and a successful racer – he has scored podiums there in GB3 and F3.

Bearman will head to the race after showcasing his burgeoning talent during a number of races in his rookie F1 campaign, building on the reputation he earned following his stand-in appearances for both Ferrari and Haas last season, particularly in finishing seventh for the famous Italian team in Saudi Arabia.

He joined a squad that turned up for pre-season testing with what appeared to be the slowest of the 2025 cars and so it proved in Australia, where Bearman started from the back of the grid before finishing 14th, the lowest of the classified runners. Improvements followed with upgrades at the Japanese Grand Prix, Bearman getting to grips with an updated floor much quicker than his experienced team-mate Esteban Ocon.

"Over this year, I was really happy with the Bahrain race [round four]," offers Bearman. "We had a tough weekend up until the race, and we managed to bring home a point from that. And in terms of personal performance, I actually feel like I've been performing in a good way.

"I've been happy with my driving. So even if the results haven't quite reflected that, it's still important to take those little victories and keep working and improving on yourself. I've been building up step by step and I'm happy in line with what I expected at this point of the season. Unexpected things are probably just the variation through different weekends, how some tracks simply don't suit our car.

"Sometimes that's a difficult thing to manage because that's never really been the case in other categories. Normally if you drive well then you're quick and if you don't drive well then you're not fast. But sometimes you can have one of your best weekends from a personal performance, and simply this track and car combination is not the one that is putting you in Q2 or Q3. And sometimes that's a tough pill to swallow. I think the other thing is, despite having so many laps compared to what I'm used to in Formula 2, the importance of each lap is still exactly the same because everyone has that amount of laps. Therefore you need to build them up step by step and they're all as important as the previous ones. So I think those are the things that have surprised me more than others, but in a good way."

A number of the circuits are new to Bearman, given the stage he is at in his career, but while he has not raced an F1 car in anger at Silverstone, the track holds a special place – even if he now calls Italy home, after relocating upon joining the Ferrari Driver Academy.

That, however, was not the beginning of Bearman's draw to the Prancing Horse, as he explains when reminiscing over his early Silverstone memories: "I remember my first grand prix that I ever went to was Silverstone in 2015. And seeing the F1 cars up close in the flesh and the speed of them and the race was incredible. Lewis won, but there was a Ferrari on the podium [Sebastian Vettel finished third].

"I was kind of underneath the podium, standing at the final chicane. Actually, if you go back on the broadcast, you can hear a little kid screaming 'Ferrari!'. And that was me.

"It was so special. And now, 10 years on, to »

AGE 20

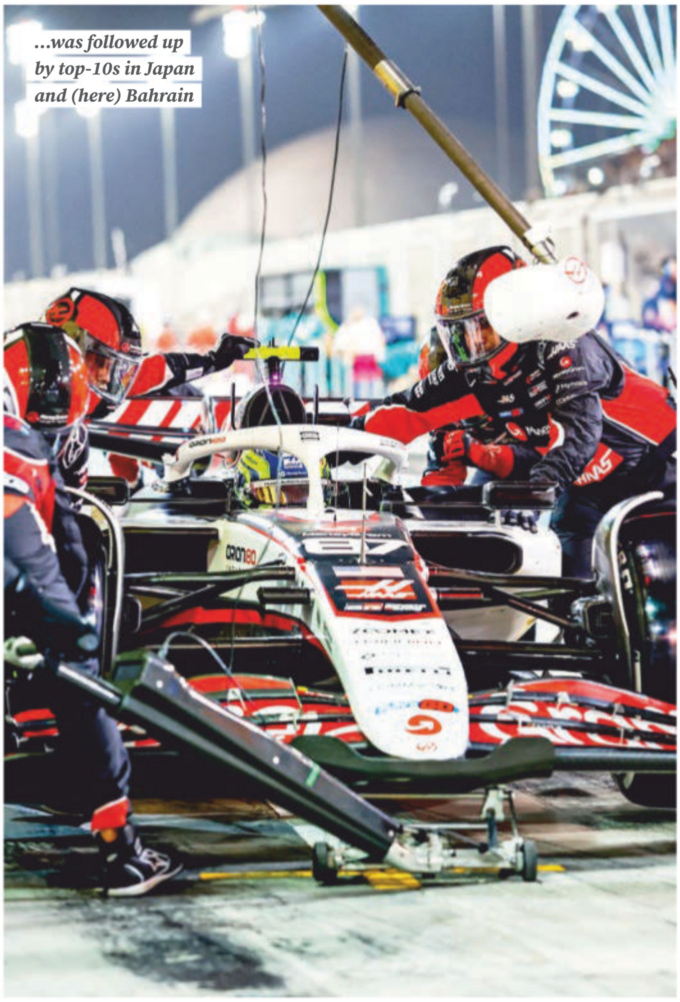
SILVERSTONE GP STARTS 0

BEST SILVERSTONE GP FINISH N/A

2025 CHAMPIONSHIP POS 17TH (6 PTS)

Bearman's clutch of points for eighth in the Chinese GP...

MASON/GETTY IMAGES



...was followed up by top-10s in Japan and (here) Bahrain

FOX/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

Silverstone spotlight will be rather more intense than in F2 last year

J SUTTON/FORMULA 1/FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED/GETTY IMAGE

"A great race" netted a podium for F3 racer Bearman in 2022

PORTLOCK/FORMULA 1/FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED/GETTY IMAGES be lining up on the grid for the first time for Silverstone, I really can't wait."

Bearman may have been standing under the podium in 2015, but he got a taste of the Silverstone champagne seven years later when he finished third in the Formula 3 feature race, coming home behind Arthur Leclerc and compatriot Zak O'Sullivan.

"That was a great race," he says, his eyes lighting up as we speak in the paddock in Montreal. "I mean, I had fantastic pace and couldn't quite overtake for the victory, but I was really close in Formula 3. And yeah, I would love to repeat that one day in a Formula 1 race, that would honestly be a childhood dream."

Bearman admits it might be some time before he is challenging for podiums and victories in F1, but he has impressed among a raft of rookies who entered the series this year and says he shares a "good relationship" with the other newcomers. That relationship with Mercedes teenager Andrea Kimi Antonelli is stronger than some others, given the pair drove together as F2 team-mates at Prema Racing last year.

"I'm really happy he's in F1, of course," affirms Antonelli of Bearman. "I mean, I think after what he did in Jeddah last year, it was pretty obvious he was going to be racing. But I'm really happy that he got the same opportunity as me.

"It's really nice to have him on the grid as well, because last year we were F2 team-mates, and we got along pretty well. And still this year we managed to carry on this nice relationship. Definitely he's doing pretty well. And it's something I expected, to be honest, because even in F2, he showed on many occasions what he's capable of."

For all of the anticipation of a maiden British GP, there is another key reason why the race weekend will mean so much to Bearman, since the occasion will be a family affair.

"THE BIT I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE MOST IS SHARING THE WEEKEND WITH MY BROTHER"

Joining F2 and F3, two non-championship British F4 races will run as support to the Formula 1 centrepiece on 5-6 July, meaning Bearman's 15-year-old brother, Thomas, will also be racing.

The younger Bearman races in F4 for Hitech and has already secured a number of points finishes on his maiden campaign – now the Bearman family will be able to cheer on the siblings. "I think the bit I'm looking forward to the most is sharing the weekend with my brother," agrees Ollie. "That's going to be so awesome. I'm really excited to be able to support him. It'll be the first race of his that I've been able to actually go to because I've been busy for all the other ones. So that's going to be fantastic.

Haas racer will be rooting for younger brother Thomas in F4

"It will be a special weekend for many reasons. And that is a particular reason why I can't wait. There will be a lot of us [the Bearman family] there for the weekend.

"I think it's incredible. My ultimate dream is to share a real F1 race with my brother. And I'm really excited for him to have that chance to be on the Formula 1 weekend for the first time. I prepared him that he's going to be waking up incredibly early because there's going to be a few early starts for him, but I'm sure he'll love it.

"It'll be a great moment for my family, my parents and my grandparents to see us both sharing the weekend at Silverstone. I'm really happy for them."

The feeling of family will extend beyond blood ties, with Haas also expected to have a heavy presence in the grandstands around the circuit. While it's an American team, Haas has its base in Banbury, and Bearman is keen to get as many of the staff along as possible to cheer on he and Ocon across the weekend.

"We managed to give away a few tickets to the team because it was also the team's home race," he explains. "I think it's an amazing thing that all of these people get to work in Formula 1 but never get to share it, unfortunately, with their loved ones, with their wives, with their kids, with their husbands.

"We were lucky enough that, as a British driver, I get an allowance of tickets in the grandstand for the weekend, which we were able to give away to the team, and hopefully they can raffle it and share the experience of an F1 race weekend with their other halves, with their kids and stuff like that. It's a really cool thing.

"I would say I'm really enjoying the bond we have with the team. I get along with everyone really, really well and I'm really enjoying being here. We always have a laugh and have a big smile on our faces."

There is no doubt that Bearman's grin when he arrives in Northamptonshire will stretch from ear to ear as he prepares for a first home F1 race, with his brother on the support card and his family and colleagues cheering him on.

MARK MANN-BRYANS

TOUCHING HISTORY

The Silverstone Museum, already an essential place to visit during the British Grand Prix weekend, has a host of new exhibits to mark the 75th anniversary of the world championship for drivers beginning here

STUART CODLING

PHOTOGRAPHY **BEN GREGORY-RING PHOTOGRAPHY**

Autosport was but a twinkle in Gregor Grant's eye when Silverstone hosted the first world championship Formula 1 race in May 1950 – this venerable organ's first edition didn't fly off the printing presses until that summer. Indeed, petrol was still subject to rationing in the UK when King George VI and Queen Elizabeth watched Giuseppe Farina lead the 21-car field away from the starting line (according to contemporary reports, the Queen was rather startled by the noise).

That British Grand Prix would give extra impetus to the burgeoning domestic motor racing scene – rationing or no rationing – and fuelled the kind of interest that warranted the creation of a new magazine...

A recreation of the 'royal box' in the 1950 British Grand Prix is just one of many new exhibits in the latest refresh of the Silverstone Museum. There's still plenty to see beyond the world of Formula 1 – where else could you get so close to Steve Soper's TT-winning Rover Vitesse? – but the latest additions commemorate both the 75th anniversary of the first world championship grand prix and Silverstone's long association with F1. It's every bit as successful as last year's celebration of Indycar racing in which Nigel Mansell's 1993 title winner played a defining role.

"It's taken a long time, about six to eight months negotiating with people," says Rob Jaina, the museum's head of learning and engagement, "because this year [the 75th anniversary of the F1 world championship] everyone wants these cars on display somewhere, so it's been difficult, and this is the culmination of what we've been able to put together. We've carefully thought about what's important to Silverstone, what's important to our history – but also about what has never been done before."

Among the new exhibits will be one of Jason Wright's beautifully rendered recreations of the 1961 Ferrari 156 'Sharknose' in which Phil Hill won the world title, set to arrive mid-July. None of the originals exist, having been scrapped on Enzo Ferrari's orders after the Scuderia's disappointing 1962 campaign. Another evocative link to that era is a BRM P578 driven by Graham Hill in his first world championship year, 1962, and now displayed alongside son Damon's 1996 championship-winning Williams FW18. This is the first time the two cars have been shown together. There are also plans afoot to bring 'Old Faithful', the first P578 chassis built, distinguished by its spaceframe chassis and iconic 'stackpipe' exhausts; it's currently at the Revs Institute in Florida.

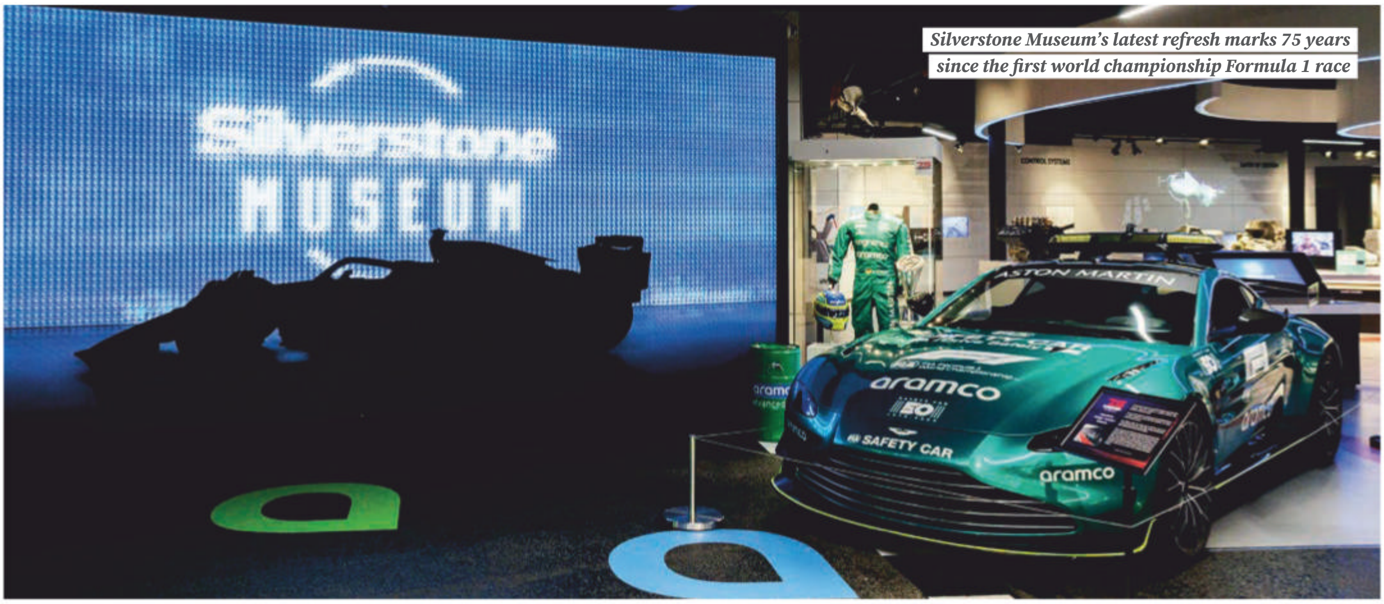
Eminent motor racing historian and BRM specialist Doug Nye is also one of the contributors to the text that accompanies both the cars and the evocations of Silverstone's history elsewhere in the museum. Longtime Autosport contributor Ian Titchmarsh remains the chair of the museum's history advisory group and has checked over every word.

Besides the fantastic racing machinery on display, and a fascinating exhibit documenting the history of safety in grand prix racing – including the 'tub' of fridge magnate David Purley's LEC in which he survived a record 180G impact during pre-qualifying for the 1977 British GP – there is some remarkable documentation. Perhaps most significant to the dawn of what we now know as the F1 World Championship is the ill-tempered correspondence between Enzo Ferrari and the Royal Automobile Club, disputing what was agreed and with whom over whether the Scuderia would make the trip to Silverstone. Famously, it didn't, and Ferrari would only join the world championship at the second race.

"A BRM DRIVEN BY GRAHAM HILL IS DISPLAYED ALONGSIDE SON DAMON'S 1996 WILLIAMS"

Back then, Silverstone was but a windy airfield on the fringes of Northamptonshire. Now, not only does it proudly call itself the home of British motorsport, the site continues to evolve. There's a huge Hilton hotel complex opposite the 'Wing' pit complex, and the Escapade Silverstone development of 60 residences overlooking Maggotts enables guests to take in the track action while enjoying cutting-edge architectural spaces.

Enzo wouldn't recognise the place.


Silverstone
MUSEUM
ASTON MARTIN
aramco
SAFETY CAR

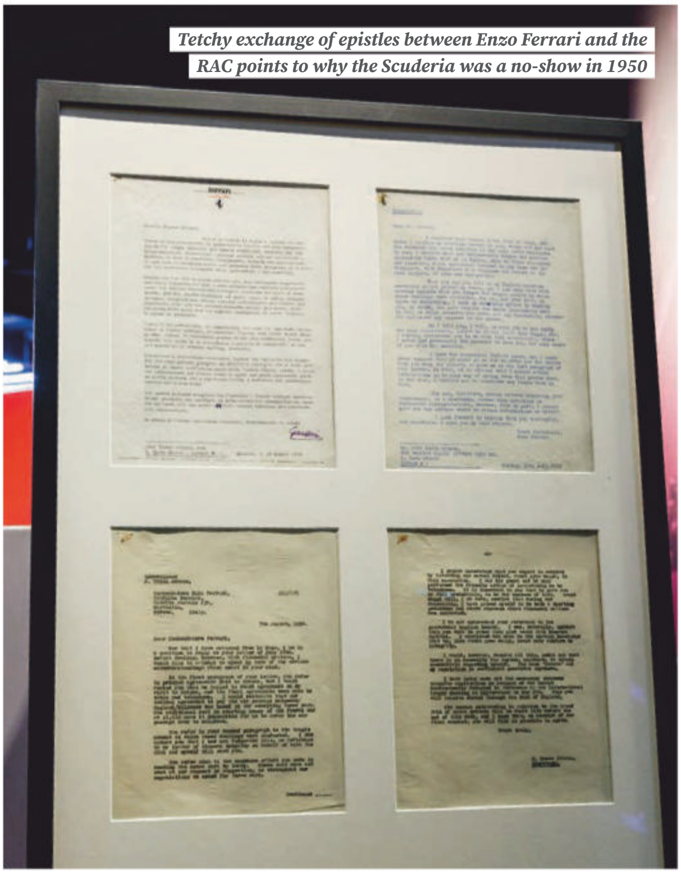
Silverstone Museum's latest refresh marks 75 years since the first world championship Formula 1 race

Canon
elf
5
RENAULT
GOODYEAR
75
FOSTER

The Williams FW14B in which Nigel Mansell dominated the 1992 British Grand Prix – and sent the crowds wild

BRDC
Silverstone
MUSEUM
Silverstone
MUSEUM

The 1950 British GP's snug corrugated roof and scaffolding pole 'royal box' has been recreated



Tetchy exchange of epistles between Enzo Ferrari and the RAC points to why the Scuderia was a no-show in 1950

EXIT
Mobil 1
Mercedes-Benz
Virgin
POTENZA
John Player Special
JPS
1

Museum's Rob Jaina says it took up to eight months of negotiations to bring together the new display

2025 has been heavy going – here Alonso takes to the Barcelona gravel

ILLMAN

Stroll's sixth-place finish in Australia is the best result of the season so far

MASON

WHAT'S GOING ON AT ASTON MARTIN?

Newey, Cowell and Alonso. The people at Aston have more world titles than most of the rest of the F1 grid combined, but the team in green isn't having a good 2025...

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY **GETTY IMAGES**

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN – especially in Formula 1. While British teams, draped in the deepest of verdant hues, arguably ruled the roost in the early 1960s, the glory days of British Racing Green were phased out for a clutch of multi-toned cigarette packets on wheels as the 1970s approached.

Revivals seldom paid off. Lotus's attempt to reinstate the green in its sunset years was impinged upon by myriad smaller sponsor logos. Jaguar's rebrand of Stewart lasted five disappointing years with its cars bobbing around in the midfield, and Tony Fernandes's Lotus/Caterham squad showed initial promise but could not truly clamber off the back of the grid.

On the face of it, Aston Martin could be viewed as heading the same way. Since the team's chairman Lawrence Stroll decided to buy into the luxury car brand, and then used its image to lend his own Racing Point team the James Bond-adjacent veneer of a classy, serious racing team, fortunes have been mixed. The team was hurt by the last-minute floor regulation changes in 2021, when its Mercedes-inspired car tended not to excel as much as it had the year prior, and a deliberately conservative 2022 effort was moulded into a more competitive car by the arrival of Dan Fallows. A high-profile recruit from Red Bull, Fallows led the technical charge into 2023, a season that began tremendously well with Fernando Alonso collecting a series of podium finishes and consistently the biggest challenger to the Red Bull drivers at the start of the year.

Then the sheen started to fade. Development of the AMR23 did not appear to catch on through the year, leading to a downturn in results. This continued into 2024; the season started reasonably well, but attempts to improve the car backfired. While augmentations to the peak performance may well have existed, they appeared to be unreachable as the handling characteristics declined over the course of the year.

Of course, Stroll's vision for the team could not sanction such a decline; Fallows was moved aside, team principal Mike Krack was given a new role, and recently added CEO Andy Cowell – formerly the chief of Mercedes High Performance Powertrains – was installed in the Luxembourger's stead. Krack effectively took over performance director Tom McCullough's role as the dominoes continued to fall. This all succeeded the bombshell announcement that the team had secured the services of revered design guru Adrian »

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Newey, lured by the offer of shares, the team's new facilities overlooking the Silverstone circuit, and a chance to hunker down uninterrupted on the 2026 car.

Accruing the top-level dyad of Cowell and Newey gives Aston Martin a huge level of credibility as it embarks upon its 2026 project. Newey's lengthy list of successes is well-known, with titles at Williams, McLaren and Red Bull, but it's equally important to hand Cowell his flowers too. After starting out with Cosworth, with a brief stint at BMW before rejoining the British marque, Cowell spent around 15 years working on Mercedes' various F1 engine projects. Installed as managing director in early 2013, the Briton was credited as a key force behind the German manufacturer's whirlwind success at the start of the turbo-hybrid era.

Although the all-new facilities at Aston Martin are impressive, Cowell and Newey have both – as is their wont – identified areas for improvement. But, while Newey's attention is on the next series of regulations, Cowell has to carry the can for the here-and-now.

The thorny subject of 2025 cannot be avoided here, since the year has not started with anything approaching the same vigour as did 2023 or 2024 – and the bespectacled team principal admitted that "the journey [at the start of the year] hasn't been enjoyable", with points coming at a premium.

WHY 2025 IS A TEST BED FOR 2026

When it was put to Alonso earlier this year that 2025 was almost a holding pattern for the team, he largely agreed with that sentiment. But the idea of driving a 2026 car, and one influenced by Newey no less, is still tickling his competitive itch. The Spanish veteran would have no qualms about riding into the sunset to collect his pension were that not to be the case.

Alonso has therefore been largely content with the idea that 2025 is simply laying the groundwork for what could be a last hurrah – a last attempt at securing win #33 and title #3. Either way, Aston Martin has at least pressed updates into service, and these appear to have helped the team find a little bit more in the way of performance.

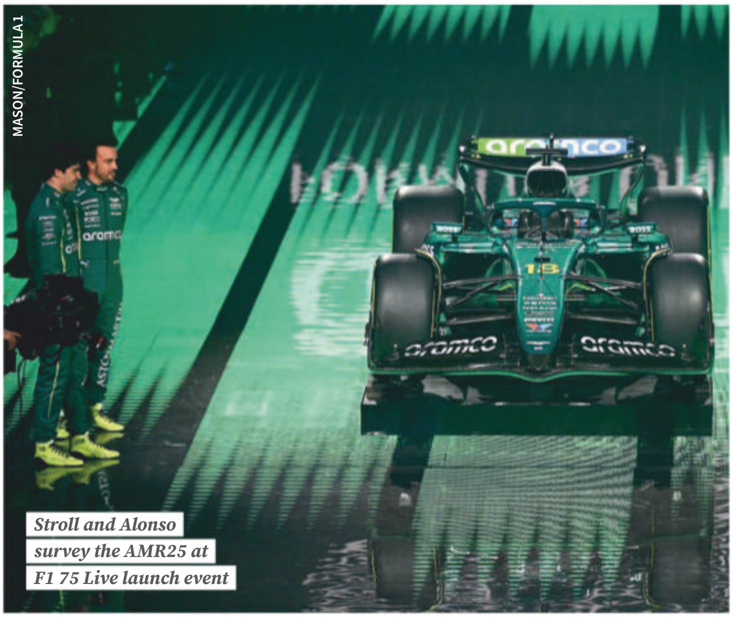
In his explanation of the opening updates brought to the track at the start of the 'European season' in May, Cowell stated that these had been in development since December, but that the team had chosen to push back their introduction to give the aerodynamicists time to calibrate them in the new wind tunnel.

The intention was not to necessarily create that delay, Cowell explained, but to ensure that the team was sure that any new parts offered something on their delivery to the circuit – in this case, Imola. In any case, starting a part in one wind tunnel and finishing it in another helps to close out the commissioning work approaching completion in Aston Martin's new facilities.

"We've got some really talented people – how do we get all of us to work well together so that we have ideas and we swiftly introduce full-size parts to the track and we've got »

MAUGER/LAT
HONE/LAT

Reshuffle by Stroll (right) shifted Cowell into team principal role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Stroll and Alonso survey the AMR25 at F1 75 Live launch event

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confidence that they work?" Cowell said of the Aston Martin engineers. "It's creating a racing team that can do that, having innovative ideas and quickly getting them to the race track so our time to the circuit is as tight as possible, but we're not rushing and therefore missing the target.

"That for me is the number one priority because that's what's important for our future. However, the journey over the last six races hasn't been enjoyable. Coming racing and not getting points is not enjoyable, so there's a desire to make the AMR25 a more competitive car, but there's probably a greater desire to make sure that our innovation machine is more robust and then we can squeeze the timeframe."

While it might seem folly for Aston Martin to put resources into an underperforming 2025 car, there is still value in doing so, as expressed by the use of the new wind tunnel. Spending the money on parts and testing them ensures that, when they reach the track, the team has a clear vision of how the data produced in wind tunnel testing correlates to the real thing on track. Had the team mothballed its work on 2025 and simply used the wind tunnel for 2026 development work, then the link between simulations and track data would simply not exist.

Allied to that are Newey's own suggestions for improvement related to the current driver-in-loop simulator currently used by Aston Martin. In his conversations with Alonso and Lance Stroll, Newey found that the driver-operated simulator was lacking in its correlation to the real car; you can infer that the representation of updates did not necessarily replicate the changes in handling characteristics, versus the real-world representation.

"[Simulation] is an area that demands a lot of development," Newey said in his first sit-down with media since joining Aston Martin. "You can buy a CFD package off the shelf, but you need to tweak it, learn to use it, likewise a wind tunnel, where you can buy hardware but have to write software to drive the motion system. It's the same with a driver-in-the-loop simulator: you can have the best motion system in the world, but if you don't have the modelling to go with it, and correlation with the aero model, correlation with the tyre model and so on, it won't be of any use. It all takes time."

PREPARING FOR 2026 WITH NEWEY AND HONDA

"For the first time I can remember, we've got both the chassis regulations and power unit regulations changing at the same time. This is... interesting... and slightly scary," Newey says of the 2026 rules, which he now feels are not as prescriptive as he'd feared on their unveiling last year. "Both the new aerodynamic rules and the PU [power unit] regulations present opportunities. I would expect to see a range of aero solutions and there could be variation in PU performance across the grid to begin with – which is what happened when the hybrid regulations first came in, in 2014.

"Next year marks the start of our works partnership with Honda. I've got a lot of trust in Honda and a huge amount of respect for them, having worked with them before. They »

MAUGER/LAT

Newey says scope of changes in '26 regs is "slightly scary"

MAUGER/LAT

Heady days of 2023 – Aston's last podium was in Brazilian GP took a year out of F1 and so, to some extent, they're playing catch-up, but they're a great group of engineers and very much an engineering-led company."

Having Newey (who has worked with Honda since 2019) and Cowell (an engine man himself) working directly with the Japanese manufacturer should yield dividends, as it transfers its works attention to Aston Martin. The extent to which Honda has had to rebuild its F1 engine project is unknown, given its complex departure then partial re-entry with Red Bull, but the company should not suffer the same ills as its fraught return to F1 in 2015 with McLaren. And, although us paddock scribes occasionally hear musings about Mercedes' 2026 powertrain being strong, and the Audi and Red Bull Ford units having undergone less felicitous development periods, Honda feels like a genuine unknown.

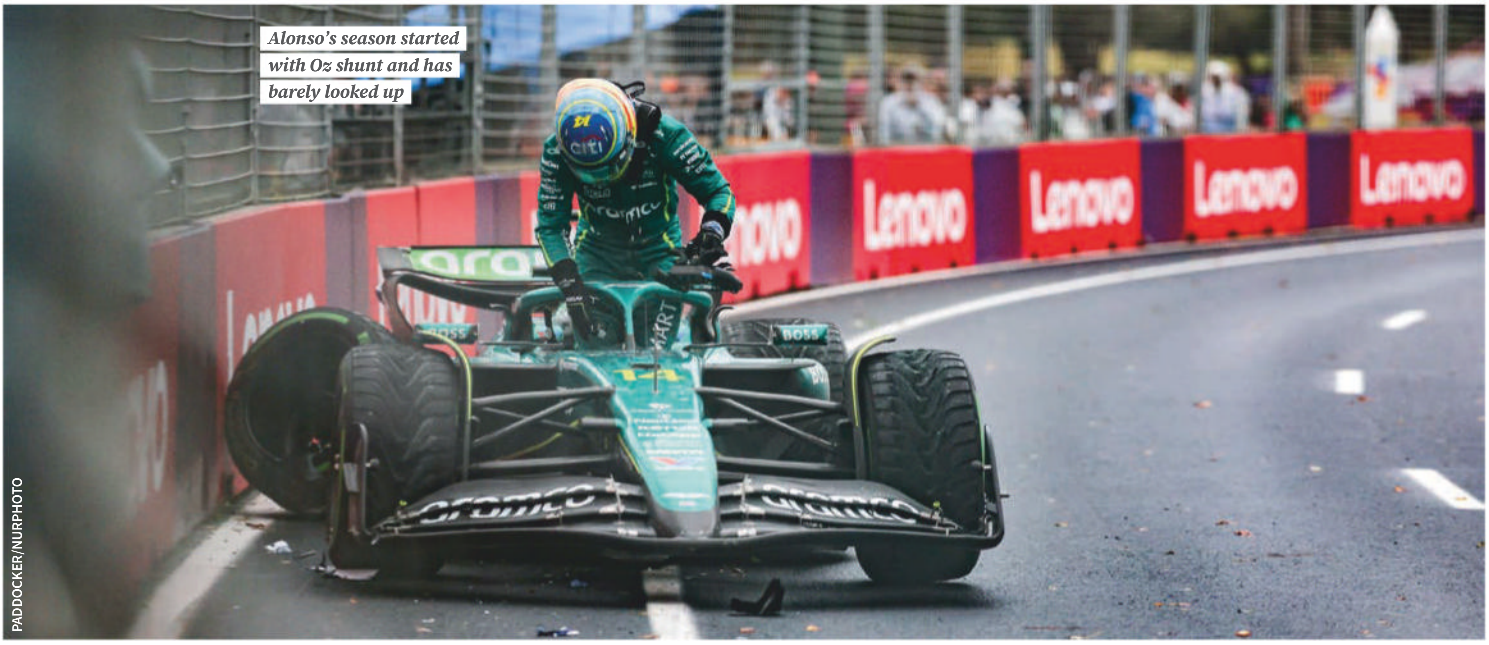
While many assume that 2026 will be powertrain-sensitive, much like 2014, the simultaneous change in aero regulations will at least give Aston Martin hope that Newey can help deliver the goods. Regardless, as Cowell puts it, managing the new regulations is not simply about 2026 – the team's attention also has to go beyond.

Take Williams, for example, managed by Cowell's former Mercedes colleague James Vowles. Much has been made of the Grove squad's approach to improving the underfunded facilities, but Vowles has also been keen to stress the value of tightening up the processes used in designing, testing and cataloguing the car build to remove the resources lost to any bloat or logjams in the system. As such, Williams has started 2025 where Aston Martin had hoped to be: bridging the gap between the top four teams and the midfield.

"We're not here for just this season, we're here to do well over many seasons," says Cowell. "The 2026 regulations, that change and the aero resource restrictions that we've got with CFD and wind tunnel time mean that we need to make some really awkward decisions. The thing that we're all absolutely united on though is that transforming our business into an efficient development machine is priority number one. That's important for both 2025 if we choose to spend resource in 2025, and '26, '27, '28, '29, '30 and onwards. So that's what we have to focus on and [from 2025 updates] we'll learn a lot – as we will at other points through this year and next year as well.

"I don't think when you've introduced a new part whether it's in a race car, in a power unit, in a mobile phone – whatever it is, when an engineering team release that part and it's being used in anger, I don't think you ever assume that either the product is perfect, or the method you used is perfect, or the people are perfect, or the tool set used is perfect. There's always areas to improve."

It was suggested last year, by a handful of those who work in F1, that teams would 'give up' on 2025 and focus entirely on 2026. While it's true that Aston Martin has partially sacrificed this season for the next, perhaps prompted by its ineffectual start to the year, a small uptick in performance is showing some of the value of 'using' 2025 as a training ground exercise. But the pressure, given its top-line recruitment over recent months, will be loaded on for next season. Cowell and Newey must steer the ship through it.



Alonso's season started with Oz shunt and has barely looked up

PADDOCKER/NURPHOTO

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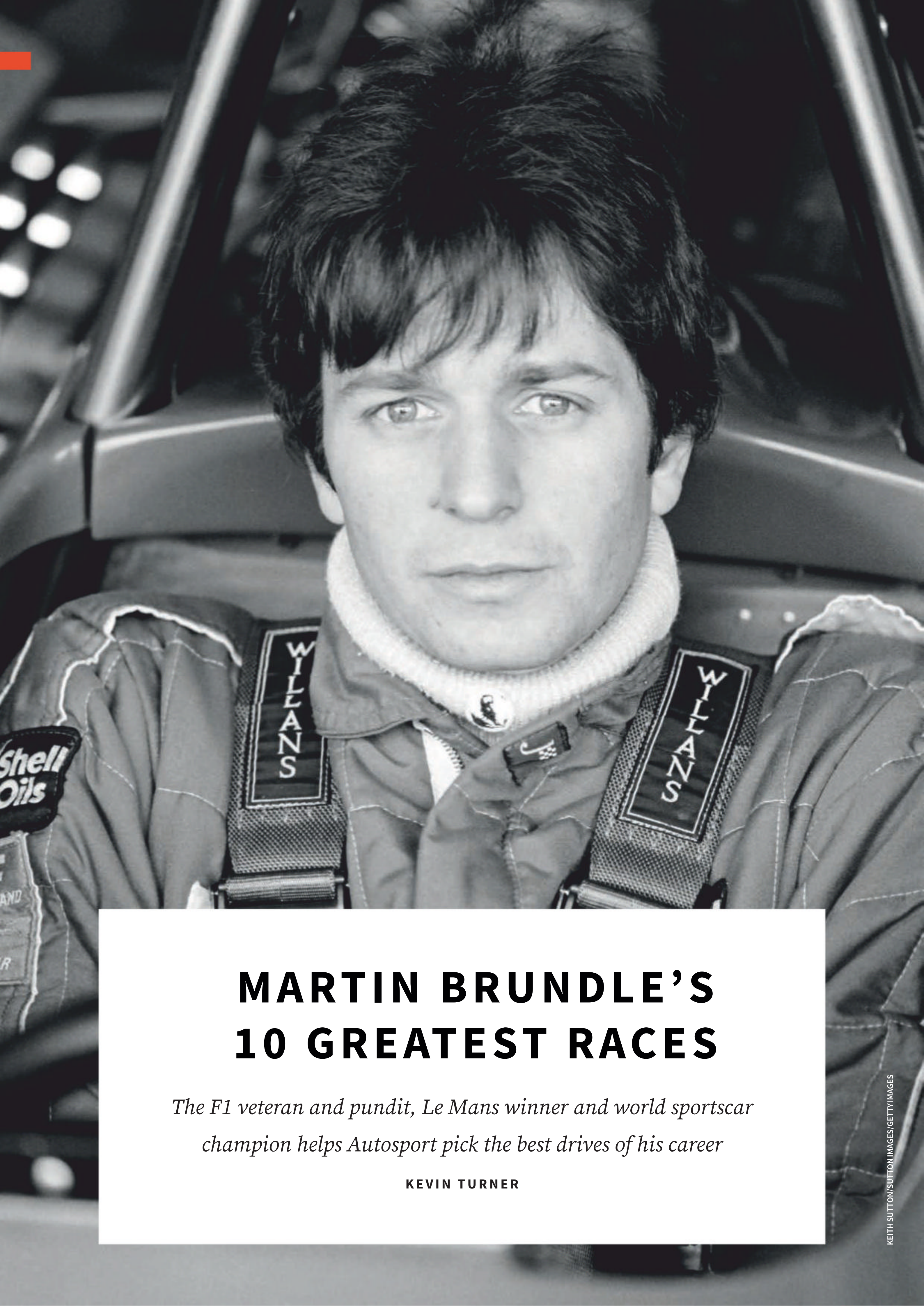

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MARTIN BRUNDLE'S 10 GREATEST RACES

The F1 veteran and pundit, Le Mans winner and world sportscar champion helps Autosport pick the best drives of his career

KEVIN TURNER

Lucas
Lucas
Lucas
dioTrent
7 MOTUL
MOTUL
DUNLOP
DUNLOP

J BLOXHAM

Brundle starred in the wet on way to his first Jag win

10

1983 DONINGTON 500

DONINGTON PARK

Jaguar XJS
Started: 2nd
Result: 1st

"I liked driving the XJS," recalls Brundle of the European Touring Car Championship racing he did in 1983. "I learned to love it. It was a handful, massive V12 in the front, and you learned to ignore 80% of what it did. You'd hit the brakes and the back would come up, it would be dancing around, you'd be coming down the gearbox, looking like you were never going to make the corner but you knew you would. It was all over the place."

The ETCC was on the up, with quantity and quality within the leading class for cars of over 2.5 litres. The Jaguars qualified 1-2 but rain arrived on race day.

John Fitzpatrick started the car he shared with Brundle and Enzo Calderari, dutifully slotting in behind team boss Tom Walkinshaw's XJS at the start. Armed with softer wet tyres, Walkinshaw raced away from the field in the early stages while the second Jaguar fell behind the quicker BMWs.

Although some of the BMWs hit tyre trouble, Jaguar's chances drastically reduced when Chuck Nicholson, in for Walkinshaw, ran out of fuel following a problem at the first pitstop. He managed to coast back but, by the time Walkinshaw headed out, they were five laps behind.

Fitzpatrick had kept the second XJS in the top five, which became fourth when the sister car hit trouble, and then Calderari took third.

A safety car period allowed several drivers to make pitstops, including Calderari, who handed over to Brundle, a lap behind the Dieter Quester/Hans Heyer BMW with just over a third of the race to go. The then-British F3 star swiftly overtook Quester to unlap himself and started taking 2-3 seconds per lap out of the 635CSi.

"Tom had some really soft wet tyres, which he had on his car, but he had an issue, so I then got the tyres," recalls Brundle. "Dropping it in the gravel on lap one would have been highly possible but I was such a child at the time, I just went as fast as I could.

"It got so wet you had to come off the throttle down the Craner Curves – but the engine would die, so I had to go down there with my foot on the clutch and then drop the clutch and bump-start the engine at the Old Hairpin!"

Walkinshaw also came back into the picture. He got ahead of the leading BMW and engaged Quester in a 'dice' that aided Brundle's charge. With just 12 of the 160 laps to go, Brundle swept into the lead. The Quester-Walkinshaw fight continued, with the BMW suffering a quick spin that incensed the experienced Austrian and allowed Brundle to take the flag 20s clear.

"Sir John Egan [Jaguar chief executive and chairman] was handing out the winners' trophy and he was clearly pretty made up about it," adds Brundle, who believes the drive was key to his later Group C outings. "It was a pivotal moment, the beginning of my Jaguar career."

GETTY IMAGES

Only Schuey beat Brundle on a difficult weekend for F1

9

1994 MONACO GP
MONTE CARLO

McLaren MP4/9
Started: 8th
Result: 2nd

Brundle had been looking impressive in Monaco, but qualified down in eighth after various troubles, six spots and 1.7s behind team-mate Mika Hakkinen. But, in the aftermath of the deaths of Roland Ratzenberger and Ayrton Senna, plus serious crashes for Rubens Barrichello and Karl Wendlinger, Brundle's experience came into play as all the drivers stood for a minute's silence before the race.

"I remember looking at all these kids, the younger drivers, looking like rabbits in headlights and thinking, 'I'm going to beat you guys today'," says Brundle, who was driving for McLaren on a race-by-race basis while the team tried unsuccessfully to lure Alain Prost out of retirement. "I'd been there before – 1994 F1 felt very much like sportscars 1985, when Manfred Winkelhock and Stefan Bellof had died. I didn't find it easy, but I perhaps compartmentalised it better than the youngsters did."

He started gaining ground immediately. Hakkinen and Damon Hill's Williams clashed at the first corner, and Gianni Morbidelli's Footwork also failed to complete the first lap. That put Brundle fifth.

Brundle was the first to make his pitstop. That, combined with his pace on new rubber, leapfrogged the McLaren to third once others had made their stops. He then pounced on Gerhard Berger's Ferrari, which had been delayed with an off on oil at Ste Devote, by diving into second around the outside at Mirabeau.

There was still a third of the race and another pitstop to come, but the gap to leader Michael Schumacher was 28.7s and the Benetton never looked like losing. Schumacher eventually took the flag 37.3s ahead, while Brundle pulled nearly 40s on Berger and matched his best F1 finish on an emotional day.

"All the alarms were going off – for water, oil – and when I parked for the podium the car was hissing and buzzing," recalls Brundle, who suffered poor McLaren-Peugeot reliability for much of 1994. "How that car got to the end of the race I'll never know.

"I remember Michael telling me and Gerhard he'd almost crashed on the oil that Gerhard had gone off on and I was thinking, 'I wish you had done!'

"I drove well that weekend. I loved street circuits, they seemed to suit my driving style. I would attack them. I had an accuracy and finesse that worked well on street circuits and in the rain."

8

1988 IMSA CAMEL GP OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

DEL MAR

Jaguar XJR-9
Started: 1st
Result: 1st

After winning first time out at Daytona, TWR Jaguar's IMSA programme had failed to yield another victory when the field gathered for the two-hour season finale on the 1.6-mile Del Mar street circuit.

Things didn't start well in practice when John Nielsen crashed the XJR-9 he was meant to share with Brundle, putting it out for the weekend. Brundle, recently crowned as the sportscar world champion, was thus transferred to the car put on pole by Jan Lammers, replacing Davy Jones.

Lammers made a brilliant start and was 17s ahead when a safety car eradicated his efforts. A second safety car around the first pitstop hurt Jaguar, and Brundle emerged behind the yet-to-pit Porsche of Klaus Ludwig and champion Geoff Brabham's Nissan.

Come the restart, Brundle managed to avoid the spinning Brabham and then overtook Ludwig to put the XJR-9 ahead once more. But running slowly had allowed the strange circuit 'goo' that characterised the weekend to accumulate on his Dunlops, and Brundle soon had a charging Bob Wollek's Porsche on his tail.

During another safety car period, caused by a heavy crash for Brabham, Brundle wanted new rubber but wasn't due to pit again. He stayed out and, at a restart following another safety car, Wollek attacked. Wollek banged into the Jaguar a couple of times before Brundle disappeared down the escape road and the Porsche took the lead as Brundle executed a neat spin-turn to recover.

"What I completely forgot about until I watched the video recently, Bob was taking chunks out of me all the way down the pit straight," relates Brundle. "I had no recollection of that! I don't remember Bob being like that."

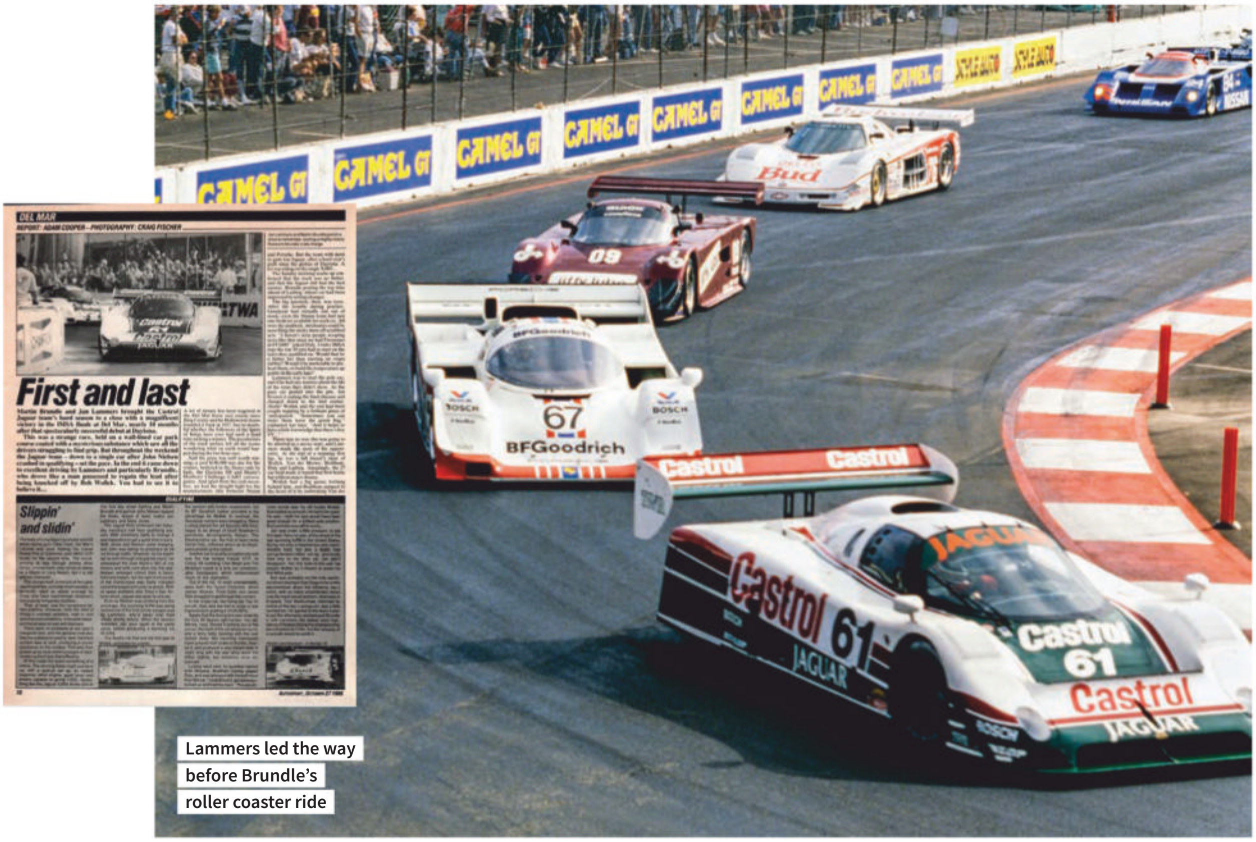
Now Brundle pitted for new tyres and a fuel top-up. He rejoined in sixth, 40s behind Wollek with just under a quarter of the race to go. While Wollek and Ludwig battled for the lead, Brundle charged to third, slicing as much as 4s per lap out of the Porsches.

Taking chances in traffic, Brundle overcame Ludwig after a brief scuffle and retook the lead from Wollek with seven laps to go. He then raced clear to win by 8.5s from Ludwig, who overcame a struggling Wollek in the closing moments.

"I put some mega moves, I remember sliding up the inside of Ludwig – I did the complete 'nothing to lose' line," smiles Brundle. "A bit like 1989 Monaco, you wonder why you didn't drive like that all the time, but you probably wouldn't get away with taking that many risks.

"The pace of the car when I put the new tyres on was like being in another championship. We had a really good car around there, but there was something on the surface to protect it. When you slowed down behind the safety car it all just got cold and turned into wax. I remember driving behind the safety car and saying, 'I've got no grip', but there was a reluctance to pull the car out of the lead.

"The track was almost unraceable but somehow we raced. It's in the list because I really enjoyed it."



DEL MAR

REPORT: ADAM COOPER – PHOTOGRAPHY: CRAIG FISCHER

First and last

QUALIFYING

Slippin' and slidin'

Lammers led the way before Brundle's roller coaster ride

MURENBEELD/GETTY IMAGES

7

1995 BELGIAN GP
SPA

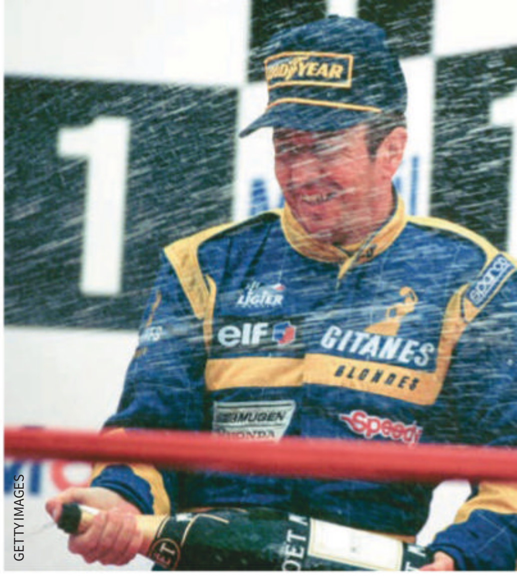
Ligier JS41
Started: 13th
Result: 3rd

"The Benetton clone by Ligier with a Mugen-Honda engine was a really good little car and I loved working with the Mugen-Honda guys," remembers Brundle of the 1995 season in which he had to watch Aguri Suzuki drive 'his' Ligier at six of the 17 rounds. "We used to mess around with the most intricate throttle linkages. It was beautiful the engineering we did that year."

Both qualifying and the race at Spa were hit by rain, producing a mixed-up grid and busy GP. Brundle rose from 13th to 10th on a dry lap one and gained another spot when Mika Hakkinen dropped his McLaren. Perhaps inevitably, Brundle fell victim to a charging Michael Schumacher, on his way to victory from 16th on the grid, but moved back into ninth when early leader Jean Alesi retired with suspension problems.

David Coulthard also hit the front and then retired the Williams with gearbox trouble, and Brundle stayed out longer than most. While some dived in for tyres, then came back in for wets as rain arrived, the Ligier made just one pitstop at half-distance – for fuel and rain rubber – and found itself third. While well behind Schumacher and Damon Hill's Williams, Brundle was clear of everyone else, and he got a bit closer to the leading duo thanks to a safety car period for the conditions.

Then Hill was handed a 10s stop/go penalty for exceeding the pitlane speed limit and the Williams emerged 13s behind Brundle with 10 laps to go. A spin made Hill's chase harder but still he arrived on the Ligier's tail on the penultimate lap. Brundle could not hold off the Williams and, on his tired wets, only beat the Sauber of Heinz-Harald Frentzen by 2s. Hill had visited the pits five times, Brundle just once. It's hard to see how the JS41 could have finished any higher that day.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"We kept making all the right calls, it was one of those races where experience came in," reckons Brundle. "We stayed on the wets, the only trouble was that at the end every tread block had a blister. I did a really stupid thing. I came out of Raidillon and moved onto the wet side to try and keep my tyres doing something and Damon came past on the dry side. I tried to outbrake him at the far end and nearly went off.

"We did a good job that day up against bigger teams, faster teams. It was a podium with my mentor Tom [Walkinshaw]; really satisfying."

6

1983 MARLBORO EUROPEAN F3 TROPHY
SILVERSTONE

Ralt RT3
Started: 1st
Result: 1st

"Magic Martin. Brundle breaks the spell," said Autosport of a victory that has become one of the most famous in F3 history. Ayrton Senna arrived at the Silverstone race – which counted for both the British and European titles – having won the opening nine British F3 rounds in his West Surrey Racing Ralt, while Brundle's Eddie Jordan Racing example had been second on all bar one of those occasions.

There were 44 entries and those wishing to score British points had to run Avon rubber. Senna, eyeing overall victory, elected to run the European Yokohama tyres, which had a performance edge.

Brundle started the meeting on Avons but wasn't convinced: "We needed points in the British championship and we were trundling round; the standard rubber was slower than the Yokohamas. We were going to win the British 'class', but we felt like we were a support race to the main event. So we said, 'Let's go European'."

His Ralt was instantly faster. The Briton took pole, 0.09s ahead of Senna, both more than half a second clear of the rest.

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Brundle led from the off, chased by Senna and Johnny Dumfries. Both pursuers suffered minor moments, helping Brundle to build a small cushion. As Senna grappled with the mix of different tyre compounds on which he'd gambled, Dumfries closed in and the Brazilian went off at Club. He recovered, only to throw it away for good at Woodcote.

Brundle was never challenged, winning the 20-lap race by nearly 16s from team-mate Tommy Byrne.

"It was an easy victory but a very significant victory," recalls Brundle, who would go on to win six of the next nine British rounds and push Senna all the way in the title fight. "The huge psychological change wasn't so much that I won the race as the fact I knew I could beat Ayrton and he knew I could beat him. Ayrton lost his head a bit.

"It was probably the biggest positive turning point in my career because it set the scene for the next few races. I can put getting into F1 down to that moment."

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Brundle's first F1 podium is not in the record books

5

1984 DETROIT GP
DETROIT

Tyrrell 012
Started: 11th
Result: Disqualified (2nd on road)

Thanks to Tyrrell's disqualification from the whole season due to technical irregularities, Brundle doesn't appear in the record books for 1984, but his was one of F1's more impressive rookie campaigns. He'd finished fifth on his debut at Rio, but perhaps his best drive was his charge on the streets of Detroit.

Brundle impressed during an accident-filled qualifying to line up 11th, 1.2s quicker than exuberant team-mate Stefan Bellof. Brundle ran on the fringes of the top 10 in the early stages, swapping places a couple of times with Bellof, and both Tyrrells moved into the top six as others hit trouble or pitted.

"For some reason Ken Tyrrell decided that Stefan was quicker than me around there, which I didn't really understand," recounts Brundle. "Ken had said in the morning that if either of you feels the other one is holding you up, raise your hand as you come past the pits as we had no radio. Every time we'd come past the pits I'd come through right behind someone's gearbox and, unbeknown to me, Stefan would have his hand up! So, Ken pits me and puts fresh tyres on, at which point Stefan snots it into the barriers and wrecks the car..."

When Derek Warwick's Renault retired with gearbox failure on lap 41 of 63, Brundle moved into fifth, 46.7s behind leader Nelson Piquet. Brundle charged after and overtook an ailing Keke Rosberg, and three laps later moved into third when Michele Alboreto's Ferrari expired.

Despite a cracked exhaust, Brundle overhauled the Lotus of Elio de Angelis, suffering with gearbox issues, and moved into second with seven laps to go. He was now 23.9s behind Piquet but pressed on, taking great swathes out of the lead to cross the line just 0.8s in arrears.

"I was pretty pleased with myself," adds Brundle. "Ken said to me, 'Jackie [Stewart] said you shouldn't have overtaken de Angelis where you overtook him', but I knew Elio was missing third gear. I knew he was slow coming out of the left-hander, so I just passed him into the last chicane.

"I think Ken thought I was getting a bit too over-confident and six days later I smashed my legs up in Dallas, so he was right and I should have taken more notice of him.

"I don't exist in 1984, but I've got the trophy and got the pins so I think I did exist in 1984. I still consider Detroit my first F1 podium."

Old sparring partner Senna hounded Brundle's Benetton

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4

1992 BRITISH GP
SILVERSTONE

Benetton B192

Started: 6th

Result: 3rd

"I loved Silverstone and the B192 – it was analogue compared to the digital Williams – and those cars were physical," states Brundle, who was not pleased to qualify sixth for his home race. But he made a brilliant start, jumping team-mate Michael Schumacher and both McLarens. Only the dominant Williams FW14Bs remained ahead.

"Michael's one Achilles' heel back then was his starts, and my experience in car set-up was paying dividends in the races," recalls Brundle, who had recovered from a poor start to 1992.

After initially running fourth, Schumacher was outfumbled by Ayrton Senna on the opening lap. They battled early on but the McLaren improved as the fuel burned off, leaving Brundle to face his old F3 foe.

"I took a bit of a gamble for the race, running less wing to be sure of being quick on the straights," said Brundle at the time. "And I'm glad I did because Ayrton was running a barn door on the McLaren. To run as quick as he did on the straights with a wing like he had… that Honda's got a lot of horsepower."

Senna cranked up the pressure, even getting alongside into Stowe at one point, but Brundle held firm. Even Senna enjoyed it: "It was a good clean fight. On some corners I could catch him; on others he was going away. I tried to pass him many times, using the backmarkers, but as the race went on I began to worry about my tyres."

Still he shadowed the Benetton. And on lap 53 of 59 came the chance that Senna needed.

"We were following Gabriele Tarquini and he was running pretty quickly," explained Brundle. "Then we all came up on Damon Hill, who let Tarquini through. I honestly don't think he saw me because he turned in on me at Copse. I had to back right off, even go down a gear more, and then Ayrton outdragged me to Becketts."

The podium seemed to have slipped from his grasp but Brundle was back in third before the end of the lap when Senna pulled off with transmission failure. Despite running out of water, Brundle made it to the flag in third, beaten only by the Williams-Renaults, 4.9s clear of Schumacher.

"The podium was mega; my beloved Silverstone, up there with Nigel Mansell and my family cheering," concludes Brundle. "It was great."

Brundle flew after his third place was snatched away

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3

1989 MONACO GP
MONTE CARLO

Brabham BT58
Started: 4th
Result: 6th

Brundle came within 0.021s of not making it into the race that is third on this list. That's how close he was to failing to pre-qualify in the days when some drivers had to go home almost before the weekend had begun.

"We'd got through pre-qualifying, which is the most horrendous thing to put a racing driver or racing team through," shudders Brundle. "There were some really good cars in there, so if you got through you were pretty much guaranteed a decent grid slot. That Brabham/Judd/Pirelli combination was really good."

Sure enough, Brundle qualified fourth, well behind the front row-dominating McLarens but just a quarter of a second adrift of Thierry Boutsen's Williams.

The team "changed everything" – including the battery – and told Brundle not to do any kind of burnout or practice start to look after the clutch, driveshaft and gearbox. That meant the tyres were cold and Nigel Mansell's Ferrari jumped Brundle at the start. But Mansell started suffering with a gearshift problem and Brundle went past on lap 27 of 77.

Boutsen had already pitted with a rear-wing problem, so Brundle was now third. Despite both McLarens having their issues – Senna with his gearbox and Prost in traffic – third looked the likely result for Brundle. After 47 laps he was nearly a minute behind leader Senna but 26s ahead of team-mate Stefano Modena.

"I was sitting there extremely happy – 'This is where I should be'," continues Brundle. "Then it started to misfire."

Brundle had to pit – and get out of the car because the battery that needed replacing was under his seat. He fell to 10th and put on a fine charge, rising to sixth, helped by Ivan Capelli's March suffering an engine failure.

"I just drove like a man possessed," adds Brundle. "I passed two Tyrrells in two corners – I did JP [Jonathan Palmer] into Mirabeau and [Michele] Alboreto into the hairpin on the same lap. I had so much more grip. It was like a video game; I just kept catching and passing cars."

Brundle set the fastest non-McLaren lap by half a second. But team-mate Modena took third: "There's nothing to rub salt in the wounds more than to be denied a result you really deserved only to see your team-mate get it."

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Brundle remains convinced he was going to win in Canada

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2

1992 CANADIAN GP
MONTREAL

Benetton B192
Started: 7th
Result: Retired

Following electrical and fuel pick-up problems, Brundle qualified seventh in Montreal but was happy with his B192 on full tanks, as he showed by being second fastest in the morning warm-up, a mere 0.001s behind Nigel Mansell's Williams FW14B.

"I always loved Canada," enthuses Brundle. "I liked a touch of understeer in my cars, I'd always gone well there and I felt really good."

Brundle jumped Johnny Herbert's Lotus on the opening lap and spent the first part of the race in the train behind poleman Ayrton Senna's McLaren. On lap 15 Mansell went off attempting to take the lead from Senna, which also helped Gerhard Berger to jump Riccardo Patrese for second and Brundle to move into fifth, behind team-mate Michael Schumacher.

The top five continued to circulate together until Senna's McLaren gave up the ghost. Brundle then jumped Schumacher as they lapped Gianni Morbidelli's Minardi and rose to second shortly afterwards when Patrese's Williams went out with gearbox maladies.

"A year or two later Michael invited me to dinner; 'I'm really sorry I used to hold you up in races because I now realise how futile that was'. It took me aback. He wouldn't let me through but I was clearly faster than him that day.

"Gerhard overrevved his engine and I was catching him. I loved the track, the car was amazing, the tyres were great… I thought, 'Finally, I'm going to win one of these things because everything is perfect.'

"I went through Turn 5 and something just disconnected, like it had chewed a gear up, and then it was all right. I radioed in and then the next lap through it failed completely. The bolts had been put in the diff the wrong way around and worked loose.

"I have zero doubt I'd have gone on to win that race. I was just flying, I was in one of those lovely grooves that I'd had in numerous sportscar races, an invincibility. That would have been a turning point because I don't think Flav [Benetton boss Flavio Briatore] could have got rid of me if I'd won the Canadian GP.

"I went to the airport and sunk the biggest whisky; downed it in one."

Brundle charges on in a solo drive that secured F1 seat

McKLEIN

1

1991 BRDC EMPIRE TROPHY
SILVERSTONE

Jaguar XJR-14
Started: 2nd
Result: 3rd

Perhaps fittingly, it's in a TWR sportscar that Brundle feels he put in his greatest drive. The Jaguar XJR-14 moved the goalposts in the category, but events at Silverstone in May 1991 made him work incredibly hard in a solo drive lasting more than two hours.

Brundle's focus was on his Brabham F1 season, so he couldn't do the whole campaign. The plan was for him to drive both cars, led by Teo Fabi and Derek Warwick, which is how he'd finished first *and* second at Monza two weeks before.

"I put it on pole, much to everyone's chagrin, because I was the part-timer," recalls Brundle of his 1m27.478s Silverstone effort in Fabi's car. Brundle was set to start the other XJR-14, but the throttle cable broke almost immediately and Warwick was transferred to the healthy Jaguar, leaving Brundle to try to recover the six lost laps alone.

"It was a flying venturi, it just stuck to the road," explains Brundle of his favourite racing machine. "One of those cars that just worked.

"I just drove it absolutely flat-out from start to finish. I always felt more empowered in Tom [Walkinshaw]'s cars because he believed in me. I was his man and he was my man."

While Fabi and Warwick cruised to victory, Brundle routinely took 3-4s or more per lap out of the rest of the field. "The team thought they were doing some good by showing me P14 – 'You are now joining the race', as a well done – but I was like, 'Are you kidding me?! I'm exhausted.' It broke my heart.

"To entertain myself I started taking Bridge flat-out, then I'd challenge the car somewhere else – 'I bet you can't do this or that' – and it did. I amused myself by talking to the car – I don't know what I thought I'd do if I was right!

"I went around the outside of one of the Mercs at Becketts. It's one of the three races I threw caution to the wind. I took no prisoners but I don't remember touching anything."

Not only did Brundle set the fastest lap, but it was also a mark that he would not better in his F1 Brabham come the British GP that July. On his way to third he took two laps back from the winning sister car and three out of the second-placed Mercedes of Karl Wendlinger and Michael Schumacher.

"I was exhausted, I couldn't get out of the car," remembers Brundle, who completed the race with no drinks bottle. "I sat there crying – I'd run out of something and kept apologising to people. They had to lift me out the car. The car was so hot and so physical, so much downforce.

"In the post-race stuff, somebody asked me, 'How did you find it driving the whole race by yourself?', and Michael – the first time I'd ever met him – looked at me and said, 'You drove the whole race yourself?' There was almost a nod of recognition!

"That race helped Ross [Brawn] and Tom justify me going to Benetton for 1992. That's one of the drives people come up to me most about and say, 'I was in the crowd that day'. It was a great day."

SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES

WAS THIS THE CRAZIEST BRITISH GP?

Fifty years ago, the combination of track surface, rain and some interesting ‘strategy’ caused chaos at Silverstone

PAUL FEARNLEY

Whose team could change four tyres the faster? Ken Tyrrell and McLaren’s Teddy Mayer had £600 riding on it. The former’s crew – a gun guy at each corner, a jack man at either end – was said to have gone sub-10 seconds during practice. The latter’s squad was reported to be using insider Indycar knowledge: spring-loaded captive hub nuts. With their respective number ones Jody Scheckter and Emerson Fittipaldi suited up, they rebooted. Scheckter lit his new Goodyear wets after 12.8s. Fittipaldi was let down by his equipment. Just a bit of fun in the build-up to the 1975 British Grand Prix.

Except that Silverstone’s widened pitlane obviated the mandatory red flag upon rain’s onset – a provision not as yet implemented – so that teams could shed their slicks and get wet-shod. And the sky over Club was darkening as Carlos Pace’s Brabham headed the pack into Copse.

The Brazilian would lead the first dozen laps, whereupon Clay Regazzoni’s Ferrari blew by at the new Woodcote chicane – Tarmac laid over polythene sheeting and retained by wooden kerbing spiked into the old road! – and stormed away. Speaking of which, the barometer swung on lap 19 – it was beginning to spit – when ‘Regga’ dropped it at Club and biffed his rear wing awry. Poleman Tom Pryce’s Shadow now hit the front. Two laps later – spits had become spots had become a squall – he twitched, and whacked the sleepers at Becketts.

Scheckter, the most aggressive on slicks, had in short order passed Niki Lauda’s Ferrari, scything through at Club just as Regazzoni went a-mowing, and then Pace at a still dry Copse to be second. But, as wary witness to Pryce’s crash – and perhaps buoyed by those 12.8s – Jody pitted at the end of the lap. Those giving chase – Pace, Lauda, Fittipaldi, Hesketh’s James Hunt and, making stealthy progress in the second McLaren, Jochen Mass – stayed out.

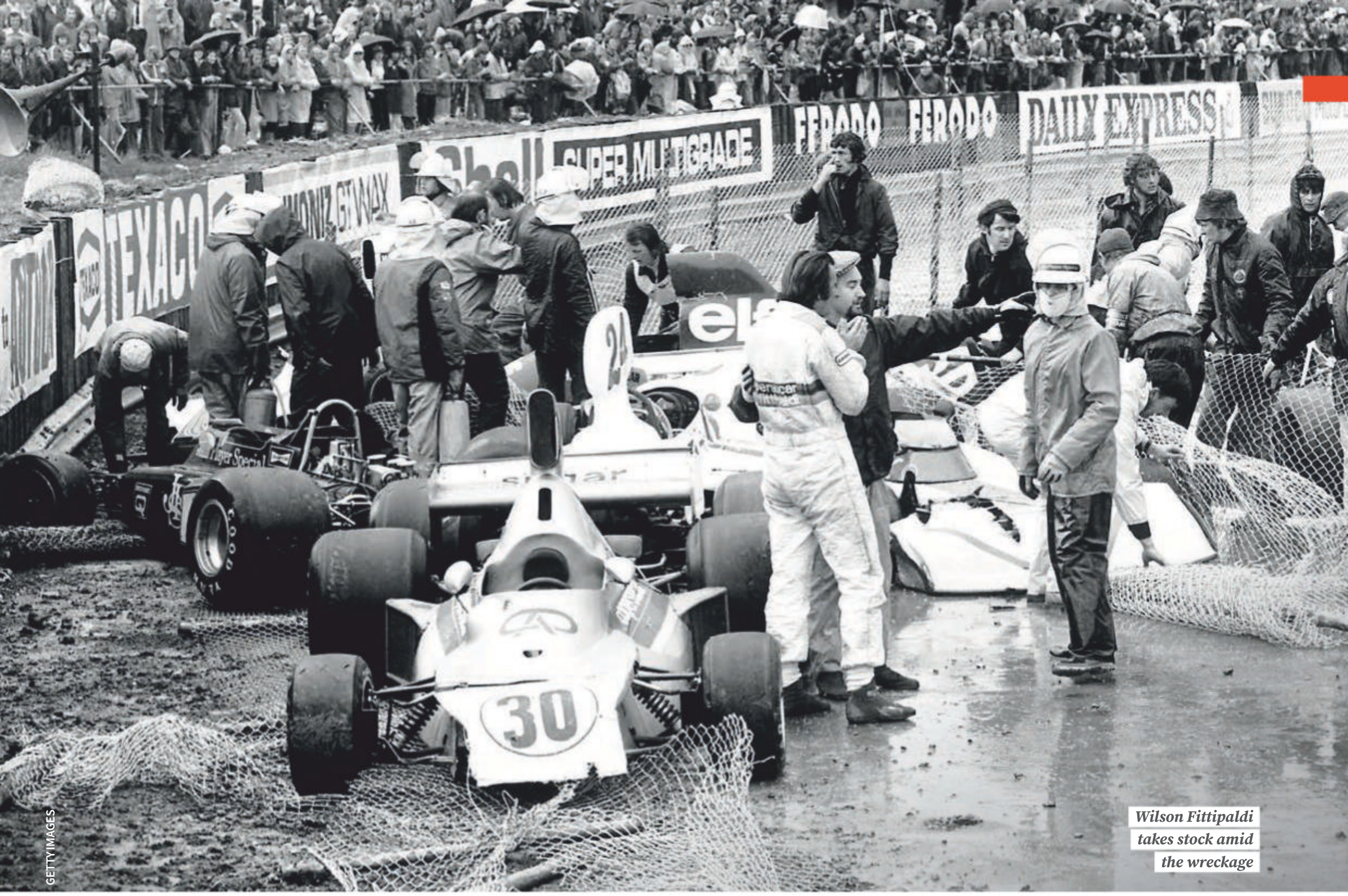
“I was usually pretty good in those kind of circumstances,” reckons Scheckter. “I always felt that you could stay out quite a long time on dry tyres. It was only when you started aquaplaning that you needed wets.”

Today’s mantra in such circumstances is: be on the right tyres for the conditions. Easy to say in an era of ship-to-shore radio, weather radar, real-time data analysis, warm, cosying ‘blankets’, and muscularly memorised sub-2s swaps.

“Pitstops were not a part of Formula 1 back then,” reflects John Watson, his underfunded Surtees mired in the midfield. “The cars were not designed for them. There was no pit equipment, as we know it today. No way to say that you were coming in other than a hand signal, followed by another lap. The pinnacle of motorsport in the mid-1970s – you couldn’t make it up!

“A team would be swinging its legs, drinking tea, thinking how great F1 was. They’d not have a clue what was happening elsewhere on the track. It was a different mindset. Simple contingencies a team manager might have considered? A weather report for one. Silverstone had an ATV [Airport Transit Visa], people were flying in and out – *they* could have told you what the weather was doing. But, no. The only person out the back of the circuit was Ian Titchmarsh, doing circuit commentary.

“So much could go wrong. If I came in unannounced would they have tyres ready to fit? How many jacks did we have? The wet was good in that we had one – there »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Wilson Fittipaldi takes stock amid the wreckage

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McLaren vs Tyrrell pitstop challenge a bit of pre-race fun

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Pace demoted poleman Pryce's Shadow at the start

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1975 BRITISH GP LAP LEADERS

DRIVER	LAP
Carlos Pace Brabham	1-12
Clay Regazzoni Ferrari	13-18
Tom Pryce Shadow	19-20
Jody Scheckter Tyrrell	21
Carlos Pace Brabham	22-26
Jody Scheckter Tyrrell	27-32
Jean-Pierre Jarier Shadow	33-34
James Hunt Hesketh	35-42
Emerson Fittipaldi McLaren	43-56

were no inters – but often they'd sit unused on their rims for months, left curing in the sun. They'd be as slippery as hell if their compound had deteriorated. At least by staying out you were trusting yourself. That was the judgement that I – and others – made in that first phase of rain: manageable. Plus Silverstone is well known for its microclimates. Why fit wets when you might only get four or five laps on them?"

Fair warning. Scheckter's stop was not all he might have hoped for, and – despite autobahn speeds along pitlane – he emerged ninth. It was, however, better than Lauda's. The left-front detached as the Austrian accelerated away. Hoses were stretched comically to reach, and the offending wheel was reattached – on the wonk. Lauda crabbed and crawled to pit once more.

Scheckter, meanwhile, was catching up. Hand over mist. On lap 27, he overtook: Mass, into Copse; Fittipaldi, around the outside at Maggotts; Hunt, from way back at Becketts; and Pace, surfing the Brabham's bow wave diving into Stowe. Within five laps he was almost 30s ahead – of Shadow's Jean-Pierre Jarier, also on wets, who had passed three cars on lap 30.

Ah, but the sun was peeping through. On lap 32, Scheckter pitted from the lead for a second time (team-mate Patrick Depailler had come in two laps earlier, for wets). Scheckter's should have been a slam-dunk – but his second stop was worse than his first: 46s, due to a shortage of airline pressure. Had those 12.8s cost precious psi?

"We ran out of [compressed] air," says Ian Flux, then the skinny, keen-teen at Embassy Hill. "We only had four bottles per race. And there was nowhere to recharge them. We had made so many stops that we had to use smash-hammers for the last one."

Jarier, too, cut his deep-cut losses, Hunt sweeping into the lead as the Frenchman peeled for slicks on lap 35: a stop that cost five places.

Hunt's car, however, was not in rude health. A fractured exhaust pipe – to break free eventually and almost collect Scheckter – was not only costing power, but also cooking a CV joint, and so greasing the rear brakes. Fittipaldi, sensing weakness, closed quickly.

This Brazilian's progress had been measured. Positive when propitious, he had stayed in the hunt – picking off 'Master James' twice to run second to Pace – before easing his pace as the rain quickened. Unfazed by Scheckter's hydro-technics – Emmo indeed made a crucial pass on compatriot 'Moco' amid the mist – he avoided Mass spinning from second place on lap 30, and waited for the race to come back to slicks. He prised the lead from Hunt on lap 43. Just as importantly, he had put Regazzoni – running quickly with a new wing atop a bent stem-post – two laps down with a not-today-sunshine move at Woodcote. The obstreperous Swiss was now Pace's problem. Fittipaldi had his manageable gap.

Freakish conditions, of course, were beyond control. The circuit's Northants half was dry, but its Bucks bit was bubbling up. Club would cop it first. But it was Jarier's shunt at Woodcote on lap 54 that tipped the pits the wink. Too late, for most.

Jarier's head was still swimming – helmet cracked, forehead gashed by one of the wooden poles supporting the four miles of wire-netting catch-fencing – as the rest tipped their visors to fate. Pace spun at Becketts on lap 56, rejoining just in time to join Scheckter, tiptoeing in second place and second gear, in the walls of water and wood.

"They had just done a new surface that must have been very porous on top and sealed at the bottom," says Scheckter. "When it was raining to a certain extent you »

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GOODYEAR
3
LUCAS

Slick-shod Scheckter confident and aggressive

McKLEIN

1975 BRITISH GP RESULTS

POS	DRIVER	GRID
1	**Emerson Fittipaldi** McLaren-Ford M23	7
2	**Carlos Pace** Brabham-Ford BT44B	2
3	**Jody Scheckter** Tyrrell-Ford 007	6
4	**James Hunt** Hesketh-Ford 308B	9
5	**Mark Donohue** March-Ford 751	15
6	**Vittorio Brambilla** March-Ford 751	5

had great grip. As soon as it filled it was like a swimming pool. I was just gliding, floating, no steering. The back end wasn't working. You lifted your foot and everything went silent. Zero grip. Five or six of us went off at Club. But Ken gave me a hard time about it."

Tony Brise, peering from behind Fittipaldi, had been the first (of 12) to crash on that lap, his helmet – of 'frangible bolt' notoriety – ripped off by the fencing.

Debutants Dave Morgan and Brian Henton – the latter replacing rainmaster Jacky Ickx, who had called time on his troubled spell at Lotus – were next to fall foul of the weather. Morgan was still in his cockpit when the Hesketh of his old F3 sparring partner Hunt slithered scarily up the Surtees's nose. And an ambulance had been scrambled and parked at the scene by the time Wilson Fittipaldi's Copersucar arrived – backwards. Injuries were thankfully light bar those of marshal Howard Tilden – broken leg, dislocated shoulder – who had been bravely tending to Brise when the situation escalated.

The front advanced to Stowe: Mark Donohue's March, Watson and Mass were ensnared by its fencing. Depailler crashed trying to escape it.

"It seemed no worse than the first shower: manageable," claims Watson. "Then suddenly it was like a mirage in the desert. The bottom half of Hangar Straight was like a mirror. Was it an illusion? No, it *was* a watering hole. It felt like an inch of rain had been dumped in 20 seconds. I was a passenger.

"Catch-fencing was good as a means of arresting a car where there was not a huge amount of room. There might have been more injuries without it. But I don't think anybody in F1 had appreciated the amount of energy involved if a driver's head hit a pole, even at 50-60mph. But it's what we had."

Fittipaldi made it through – just – and promptly pitted for wets. So, too, did the March of Vittorio Brambilla.

"By climbing the pitwall fence you could see the black clouds coming," said team boss/designer Robin Herd. "I swear, as Vit came past the pits, that we made eye contact. We both knew now was the time."

> *"It was like a swimming pool. I was just gliding, floating, no steering. Zero grip"*

Fast in practice – fifth – Brambilla had been hampered during the race by a misfire, particularly on left-handers. Belying his wild man reputation, however, he had kept his cool and 'it on the island' to be fifth – from a low of 15th – at the time of his intuited stop on lap 55. He would be second next time around – the only man to complete the final lap entirely at racing speed.

The race had been stopped by frantically waved flags of various hues 11 laps early. Rescue vehicles were rumbling across the track in the murk. One was treating a female spectator struck by a vaulting pole from Jarier's shunt. An official's Wolseley Ambassador was 'seen' splashing along the start/finish straight, as marshals stood in the middle of the track to finally convince an understandably confused Fittipaldi that it was over.

"We didn't know," said McLaren team manager Alastair Caldwell. "Emerson had pitted before the red flags. We sent him out again. Only then did we discover it had been stopped. My boys were upset because they thought we'd lost it. But I knew that the start/finish line was before the pits, that Emerson had completed his lap in the pitlane – and that the result would be taken from the lap before.

"He was a good wet-weather driver. Seventh on the grid, he won through racecraft. He made the correct call to pit when he did. We would have talked about stops beforehand – but we couldn't discuss them live. We had a board indicating that the tyres were ready if a driver wanted to come in. I would have hung that out.

"We didn't practise pitstops, much [usually]. Ours was a tiny team: seven or eight guys on the road. We might have had a few more at Silverstone, our home race. But we didn't have 20 w****** just to change tyres."

Fittipaldi was a worthy winner by any measure – mutterings of his having overtaken Alan Jones's Hill under yellows rightly ignored – but Brambilla had good reason to feel hard done by. Had the race been stopped by the chequered flag its result would have been based on all those – six of them – still running: Fittipaldi, Brambilla, Lauda, Jones, Mario Andretti's Parnelli and Regazzoni. Instead, the Italian was classified sixth, behind four crashed cars. March's resident legal eagle Max Mosley went into bat for him – for days – but an unchanged result would be confirmed. They would have bittersweet revenge one month later in Austria.

Sadly Donohue succumbed to a brain hemorrhage – likely caused by a blow from a pole – when he crashed during dry practice at the Osterreichring. A marshal was also killed. And the race was held in worsening rain.

"Denny Hulme – the drivers' representative – and I got it stopped," says Caldwell. "The rain was horrific. I grabbed a [yellow] flag and went out on the circuit. Brambilla was so excited when he saw it that he crashed going up the hill. He almost hit me."

Crazy times, crazy races.

Rival team owners demanded a restart. Mosley interjected: for that to happen a chequered flag should have stopped the race in conjunction with a black. There having been no such black flag, the result stood.

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS/CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES

Pace's battered Brabham was placed second in the results!

PHIPPS/GETTY IMAGES

Jarier's helmet was cracked by a blow from catch-fencing pole

McKLEIN

Brambilla had felt robbed, but later won in Austria

PHIPPS/GETTY IMAGES

Winner Fittipaldi celebrates with team boss Teddy Mayer

MAURICE HAMILTON'S

ALTERNATIVE VIEW

The upcoming British GP stirs memories of Silverstone's trouble 25 years ago

Look (as a certain Sky F1 presenter and politicians say when attempting to sound convincing), forecasting British weather can be tricky. But look, I can confidently say that, even if it tips down at Silverstone on the weekend of 5-6 July, conditions will be a huge improvement over the British Grand Prix of 25 years ago. If you've paid handsomely to get soaked this year, just remember it could be worse. Like, mud-up-to-your-back-axle worse.

Even allowing for Britain's round of the 2000 Formula 1 World Championship being staged in April, nature combined forces with F1's Chuckle Brothers, Bernie Ecclestone and Max Mosley, to turn Silverstone into the Home of British Mud Wrestling. Spectators weren't allowed through the gate to watch qualifying on Saturday because the car parks had been transformed into a quagmire on the first day.

On the Sunday, many of those who had parted with £90 (worth approximately twice that today) for admission tickets chose to abandon static queues and walk several miles to the track. They were the lucky ones. On arrival, stubborn motorists were eventually towed into a glutinous mess (referred to by Silverstone in a moment of enthusiasm as 'car parks') and later waited, in some cases for six hours, to be towed back out.

In between, David Coulthard won the grand prix. No disrespect to DC or McLaren, but this excellent victory was tainted in the same way as stepping in dog poo might affect your visit to the pub. It was the biggest fiasco in the 75-year history of our home grand prix.

How had this come about? Well, three weeks of relentless rain beforehand had given Silverstone a soggy clue that life as a host to 40,000 cars in the surrounding fields might be problematic. There was clearly a sense of mounting anxiety when the British Racing Drivers' Club (owner of Silverstone) sent a patronising letter to BRDC members urging them to 'stamp out any suggestions, from any quarters [sic], that Silverstone didn't do everything within its power to make this year's grand prix a success'. Silverstone did take preventive action but, come the start of the weekend, it was immediately apparent that they were already a day late and a few thousand metres of hardcore short.

That's when the blame game began in earnest. Much of the finger pointing was directed at F1's de facto boss Ecclestone, who had arranged this date on a calendar rubber-stamped by the FIA, the governing body being conveniently presided over by Bernie's mate, Mosley.

All manner of reasons (each doubtless prefaced by 'Look') were advanced for the switch from July to April. We were told that Pentecost (which rules the Monaco date) was late; that the Spanish couldn't shift their race because of a more pressing engagement; that the French wouldn't contemplate a move at any price.

An alleged remark that the BRDC might have been better off spending their money on car parks rather than an elaborate clubhouse was seen as a cheap jibe. The truth probably lay closer to this shining infrastructure on the inside of Woodcote having been grandly opened the previous July by His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent KG, thus perpetuating Ecclestone's view that the BRDC was run by a load of toffs who wouldn't know the cost of a torque wrench from a cheese and chutney sandwich.

Even more telling was an ongoing game of political chess as Ecclestone played off a change of ownership at Brands Hatch with the promise of returning the grand prix to the Kent circuit for the first time since 1986. By moving the 2000 date to April, there was every chance that Silverstone's shortcomings – and there were a few – might be cruelly exposed, strengthening Ecclestone's negotiating hand.

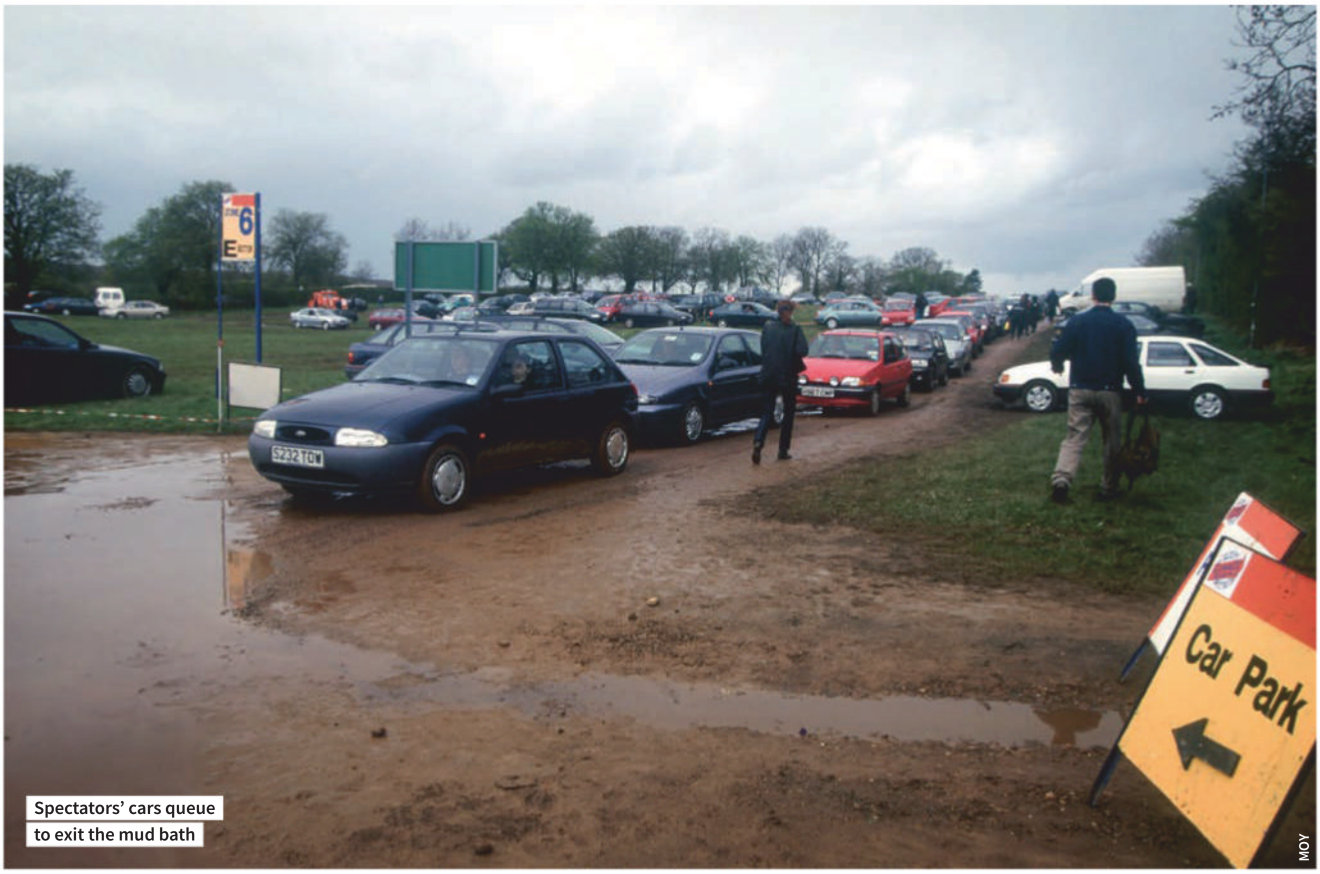
If that was the intent (strenuously denied by Ecclestone and Mosley), the result quickly became evident on the Friday. Not only were spectators facing the prospect of diminishing ride heights when they later tried to retrieve parked cars, but Coulthard became stuck when he pulled off the track with a mechanical problem. The practice session had to be red flagged when a Land Rover, attempting to tow the McLaren MP4-15, suffered the indignity of becoming bogged down on what should have been a beautifully manicured grass verge.

Everyone was affected. Paddock Club guests completing their pitlane walkabout on race day were herded through a gate and along a short – but extremely muddy – stretch of concrete. This did not go down well with well-heeled ladies who, understandably, had left their Hunter wellies at home.

> *"It was immediately apparent they were already a day late and a few thousand metres of hardcore short"*

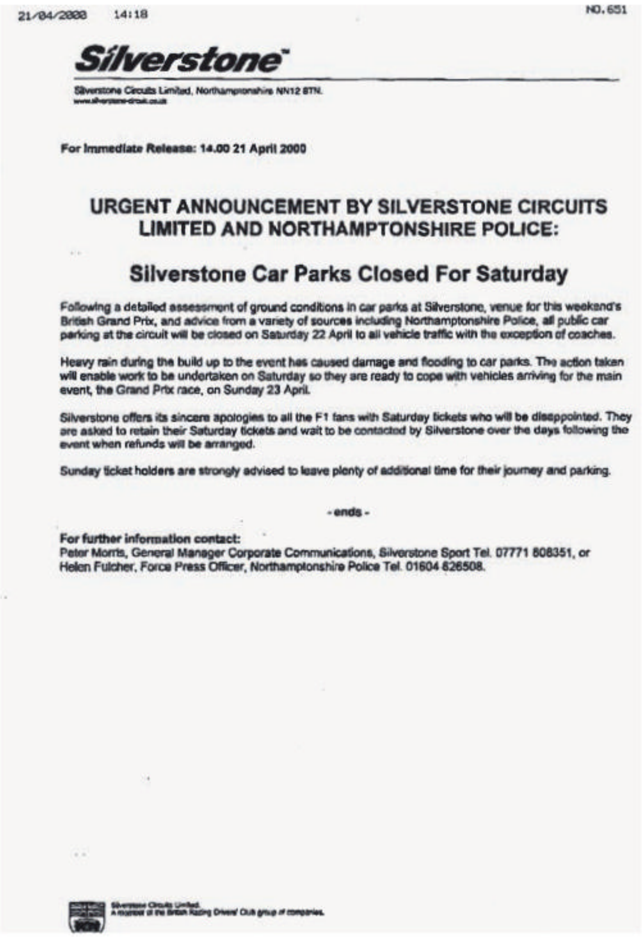
No one was immune. At one point, while trudging through the paddock on Saturday, we happened to be passing Ecclestone's motorhome. Mr E emerged with a couple of acolytes. Deep in discussion and walking briskly to duck the rain, he failed to notice a nasty puddle until the water line was exceeded on his expensive Italian footwear. An instant look of outrage was quickly followed by a furtive check to see whether anyone had noticed. We anxiously looked the other way, pretending it hadn't happened. The BRDC's directors probably wished they could have done the same when the derogatory media reports flooded in on Monday morning.

Look, it can't possibly be that bad this year.



Spectators' cars queue to exit the mud bath

MOY



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Silverstone

Silverstone Circuits Limited, Northamptonshire NN12 8TN.

For Immediate Release: 14.00 21 April 2000

URGENT ANNOUNCEMENT BY SILVERSTONE CIRCUITS LIMITED AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE:

Silverstone Car Parks Closed For Saturday

Following a detailed assessment of ground conditions in car parks at Silverstone, venue for this weekend's British Grand Prix, and advice from a variety of sources including Northamptonshire Police, all public car parking at the circuit will be closed on Saturday 22 April to all vehicle traffic with the exception of coaches.

Heavy rain during the build up to the event has caused damage and flooding to car parks. The action taken will enable work to be undertaken on Saturday so they are ready to cope with vehicles arriving for the main event, the Grand Prix race, on Sunday 23 April.

Silverstone offers its sincere apologies to all the F1 fans with Saturday tickets who will be disappointed. They are asked to retain their Saturday tickets and wait to be contacted by Silverstone over the days following the event when refunds will be arranged.

Sunday ticket holders are strongly advised to leave plenty of additional time for their journey and parking.

- ends -

For further information contact:
Peter Morris, General Manager Corporate Communications, Silverstone Sport Tel. 07771 808351, or
Helen Fulcher, Force Press Officer, Northamptonshire Police Tel. 01604 826508.

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Shiny new clubhouse attracted 'cheap jibe'

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Silverstone's travails tainted what was a fine win for DC

PHOTOGRAPHY: SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

ISAKOVIC/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

WHO HAS BEEN THE BEST DRIVER OF F1 2025 SO FAR?

Our panel debates who has shone the brightest over the season's first 10 races. Three of the picks are race winners – and one is the other F1 rookies' top rookie

MAX VERSTAPPEN

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

While you might suggest that Yuki Tsunoda and Liam Lawson aren't A-class drivers, they're no slouches either. But the extent to which they've struggled behind the wheel of this year's Red Bull suggests that the RB21 is not particularly user-friendly. Indeed, the car only seems to be quick in a very narrow performance window; on one side of it, the car's rear end is looser than the hour after a trip to Taco Bell and, on the other, the front end simply refuses to turn in. But it's testament to Verstappen's skill that he's been able to win two races in it and bring the car into a championship battle.

Sure, the great drivers should be capable of dragging a car with dubious qualities into contention, but that Verstappen has so consistently found a way of challenging the pacesetting McLaren drivers is worthy of plaudits. When high-speed corners are on the menu, the car fares better, but titles are built on minimising the deficit at the low points of the season – and that's what Verstappen has been so adept at doing. Take Melbourne, for example; the McLarens ran riot in the initial stages thanks to their superior tyre preservation abilities, but Verstappen heavily pressured Norris at the end in the wake of more arduous conditions.

He might have won in Jeddah had the first corner gone differently, he took pole in Miami despite missing the mark in his opening sector, brilliantly rounded Piastri at the start to control the race at Imola, and finished a close second to Russell in Montreal on a circuit that didn't really suit the Red Bull. Spain aside, he's been a cut above this season.

GEORGE RUSSELL

OLEG KARPOV

There's still something missing from Russell's profile that would allow us to consider him one of the best drivers on the grid, if not the best. Speed isn't it, though. Or consistency. His 2025 season has been excellent. He seized the opportunities he had in the early races to get on the podium, and he won the only race Mercedes had a chance of winning so far this year. But that's nothing new for Russell. He was all these things before the year started, too.

How would you rate a driver without a proven record of winning races and titles? In Formula 1, there's only one way to find out: put such a driver alongside a highly capable team-mate and see how they perform. Unless you doubt that Lewis Hamilton is a good enough benchmark, all your questions about Russell have already been answered. The only thing missing from Russell's CV is a world title. But in F1, you can't win one without a title-winning car. George has never had access to such a car in his career.

These doubts about him will persist until he finally wins the championship, but his current performance should be convincing enough. It's hard to imagine anyone doing better with this year's Mercedes. If the most successful driver in F1 history couldn't beat him with the same machinery, what more proof do we need before we acknowledge that he's delivering the absolute maximum?

OSCAR PIASTRI

STUART CODLING

The legendary cyclist Fausto Coppi was feted not just for his sporting excellence, but for the graceful nonchalance with which he carried himself on and off the bike. Even when he attacked solo to beat and humiliate his team-mate and rival Gino Bartali on the road from Cuneo to Pinerolo in the 1949 Giro d'Italia, there it was as he spun the pedals with casual perfection: *sprezzatura* the Italians call it, mastery without apparent effort.

Less of a Formula 1 driver's body is on display than that of a cyclist while competing, but you can imagine Piastri working the control inputs with the same coolness and delicacy. Certainly when he comes on the radio he gives little away. To some this may be considered a little boring. To his rivals – and, quietly, team-mate Lando Norris – it's devastating. The silent assassin! Probably a hell of a poker player too.

Of course, there are others on this page of the magazine who might wonder if a driver such as Max Verstappen or Charles Leclerc might be faster than both Piastri and Norris in what's believed to be F1's fastest car. 'Twas ever thus – there were those who doubted Nelson Piquet similarly, and he had the beating of Nigel Mansell while carrying a concussion.

One of the McLaren drivers is making rather heavy weather of the 2025 world championship and it isn't Oscar Piastri.

ISACK HADJAR

MARK MANN-BRYANS

Ending your first grand prix crying into the arms of Lewis Hamilton's dad having crashed out on the formation lap is not the dream of any driver aspiring to one day race in Formula 1. However, that is exactly where Hadjar found himself at the Australian Grand Prix after putting his Racing Bulls car into the wall in Melbourne, catching the attention of the F1 world – but not in the way he would have ever wanted.

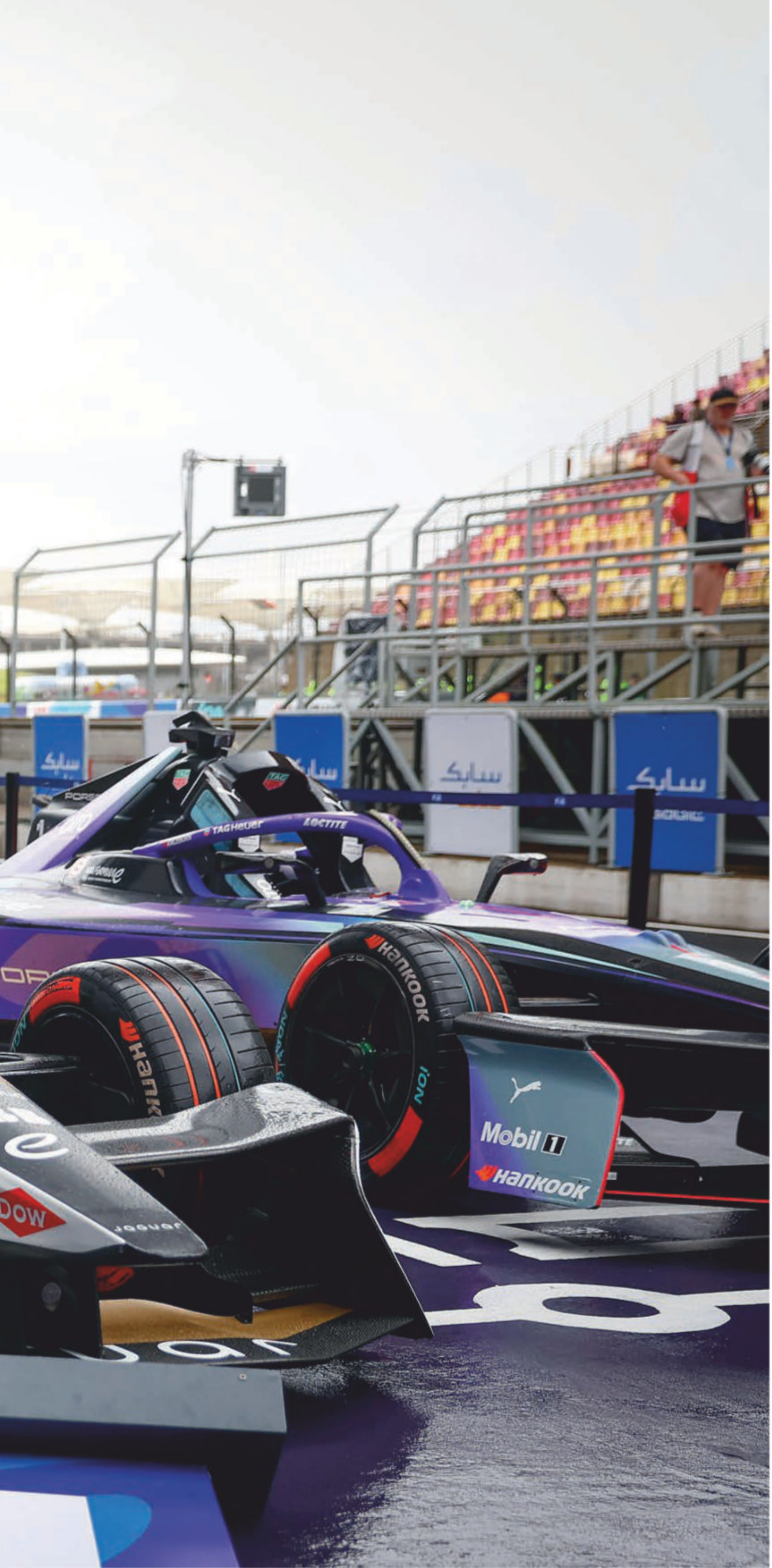
It puts his subsequent season into even sharper focus that this was how his year began. The Frenchman set about showing that, actually, F1 was where he belonged. The opening line of the Rudyard Kipling poem *If* reads: "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs…", and that is exactly what Hadjar has done. As Red Bull panicked by yanking Liam Lawson out of the senior team after just two races and dropping in Yuki Tsunoda to also flail, Hadjar was more akin to Verstappen in the way he just went about his business.

He became the first rookie to qualify in the top five at Monaco since Lewis Hamilton (Anthony would have been proud) and scored points in half of the opening 10 rounds of the championship. At a recent race, one journalist was keen to find out which rookie the other newcomers felt had enjoyed the strongest year to date and – despite some strong results for Andrea Kimi Antonelli – the answers were unanimous.

Different metrics need to be applied in this sort of debate and that is why, for me, Hadjar has been the most impressive driver on the grid in 2025. Now he just needs to kick on.

LENNON/FORMULA 1/GETTY IMAGES

Hadjar starred in Monaco with fifth-place qualifying effort



Cassidy is the raindance kid

They have history, but two nicer chaps in racing than Formula E stars Nick Cassidy and Antonio Felix da Costa would be hard to find. Here, the Portuguese (left) has alighted from his third-placed Porsche and greets the victorious Kiwi, who has just splashed his way through an utterly dominant performance at a soggy Shanghai to resoundingly provide a U-turn on Jaguar's stuttering progress through the 2024-25 season. It will be remembered, of course, that it was a gaffe from da Costa at the London finale that robbed Cassidy of last year's crown. But these things happen in racing.

Photographer Joe Portlock/
LAT Images/Getty Images

Where Shanghai, China
When Sunday 1 June 2025

Details Canon EOS R3
EF24-70mm lens, 1/1000th @ F2.8

HURLEY/PEC

Kirkwood leads Power in narrow Detroit streets, and celebrates in St Louis (below)

PEC

INDYCAR

KIRKWOOD IS THE NEW PALOU

Approaching halfway in the IndyCar season, Alex Palou and Kyle Kirkwood were the only drivers to have won races, and Honda was undefeated across eight starts. Palou's incredible form cooled when the calendar turned to June but, after Detroit and the St Louis oval, he was still holding a commanding 73-point lead over Pato O'Ward in the championship standings.

Run on a ridiculously slow and tight street circuit that breeds trouble, the Detroit Grand Prix is the schedule's wild card event. Bad luck finally caught up with Palou after winning five of the first six races, with David Malukas punting him into his first DNF of 2025. Palou went into damage limitation mode at World Wide Technology Raceway, where he qualified his Chip Ganassi Racing car ninth and finished eighth in his first truly uncompetitive showing of the season.

Meanwhile Kirkwood, who broke up Palou's early-season dominance with a victory at Long Beach, continued strong street course form at Detroit. He qualified third and led 48 of 100 laps; team-mate Colton Herta confirmed Andretti Global's strength by finishing third from pole position. Kirkwood then broke through for his first oval win at the track outside St Louis formerly known as Gateway. He never looked a factor in qualifying 10th, but a masterful undercut strategy put him out front for the final eight laps.

"I'm over the moon right now," said Kirkwood, a 26-year-old Floridian who swept every championship on the US open-wheel ladder system. "The ovals have eluded me for a very long time, so it's nice to get that first one and break that ice.

"I think Detroit was one of the most satisfactory wins I've ever had because I actually had to pass people," he added. "This kind of puts a stamp down, like, 'Hey, this kid might be able to contend for a championship and do things'." The latest wins put him third in the standings, two points behind O'Ward.

The other key mid-season storyline was Team Penske's continuing travails. All three entries qualified top five on the Gateway oval, but none finished; Josef Newgarden's night ended literally upside-down after he was swept into Louis Foster's accident. Newgarden, Will Power (seeking a contract extension) and Scott McLaughlin had combined for just three podiums this season.

JOHN OREOVICZ

INDYCAR

Detroit 1 June

1 **Kyle Kirkwood** (Andretti Global)
2 **Santino Ferrucci** (AJ Foyt Ent)
3 **Colton Herta** (Andretti Global)

St Louis 15 June

1 **Kyle Kirkwood** (Andretti Global)
2 **Pato O'Ward** (Arrow McLaren)
3 **Christian Rasmussen** (Ed Carpenter Racing)

POINTS 1 **Alex Palou** 335; 2 O'Ward 262; 3 Kirkwood 260.

PORTLOCK/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

GUENTHER HEADS DS PENSKE 1-2

After a bout of dominance for Oliver Rowland and Nissan, the championship leader was notably absent from either podium at the Shanghai International Circuit.

Maximilian Guenther (above) converted pole position into his second victory of the 2024-25 campaign in the first race, looking at home with DS Penske after making the switch for this season. Team-mate Jean-Eric Vergne made a heroic lunge on Taylor Barnard and Dan Ticktum in the last corners to steal second place and give the American team its first 1-2 in Formula E. McLaren rookie Barnard picked up his fifth top three of the season, with Ticktum just missing out on a second consecutive podium for Cupra Kiro after starting 21st.

Rain on Sunday – the third consecutive race weekend impacted by bad weather – brought another new winner for the season. Nick Cassidy was able to navigate the wet conditions to snap up pole in his Jaguar and his first race win in over a year, ahead of Porsche pair Pascal Wehrlein and Antonio Felix da Costa. Rowland was fifth on Saturday but was outside the points in the wet follow-up.

KATY FAIRMAN

Lindblad builds a gap to Montoya

DUTCH PHOTO AGENCY/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

FORMULA 2

LINDBLAD BEATS MONTOYA IN SPAIN

In what is turning into a vintage season of Formula 2, 17-year-old Arvid Lindblad claimed his first feature race victory at the Spanish Grand Prix support round to fire himself firmly into contention for the title.

The Anglo-Swedish Red Bull Junior held the advantage all the way at Barcelona, although the race finished under the safety car after late pitter Leonardo Fornaroli parked in the gravel at the exit of Turn 3 with a loose wheel. Sebastian Montoya, the son of Juan Pablo who has made huge improvements of late with Prema Racing, took the runner-up position.

That may not have been the case had the race run caution-free. DAMS-run Aston Martin F1 protege Jak Crawford led the 'alternate' race of those who ran long on hard tyres before pitting for soft rubber, after shrugging off an early challenge from Alex Dunne, who had been hit with his second grid penalty of the weekend for a qualifying collision with Victor Martins.

Crawford had hauled in Montoya and third-placed Richard Verschoor, with two and a half laps still remaining, when the safety car was called, while Dunne was up into fifth. But this was to be how they finished in an anti-climactic end.

Saturday's sprint race was anything but an anti-climax – unless your name is Crawford or Luke Browning.

Crawford got ahead of the Hitech car of Williams junior Browning on the fourth lap, and that seemed to be that until an embarrassing clash between Prema team-mates Montoya and Gabriele Mini left the Sicilian stranded.

Those further down the field dived into the pits for new soft tyres, and Verschoor's MP Motorsport car scythed from 10th to the lead within four of the remaining six laps after the restart. Rodin Motorsport driver Dunne, carrying a hefty 13 places of grid penalties, was on the Dutchman's tail and stormed up to second, while Crawford and Browning faded to fourth and sixth.

Pre-weekend points leader Browning also suffered a clumsy collision with Ritomo Miyata on Sunday and it's now Dunne at the top of the standings.

Verschoor (nearest camera) won from way down the field

J SUTTON/FORMULA 1/FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED/GETTY IMAGES

P80 TOP BRITS IN F2

RACE WINNERS 31 May - 15 June

FORMULA E

Shanghai 31 May-1 June

Race 1
1 **Maximilian Guenther** (DS Penske)
2 **Jean-Eric Vergne** (DS Penske)
3 **Taylor Barnard** (McLaren Nissan)
Race 2
1 **Nick Cassidy** (Jaguar)
2 **Pascal Wehrlein** (Porsche)
3 **Antonio Felix da Costa** (Porsche)

POINTS 1 **Oliver Rowland** 171; 2 Wehrlein 103; 3 da Costa 88.

FORMULA 2

Barcelona 31 May-1 June

Race 1	**Richard Verschoor** (MP Motorsport)
Race 2	**Arvid Lindblad** (Campos Racing)

POINTS 1 **Alex Dunne** 87; 2 Verschoor 84; 3 Lindblad 79.

FORMULA 3

Barcelona 31 May-1 June

Race 1	**Ivan Domingues** (Van Amersfoort Racing)
Race 2	**Rafael Camara** (Trident)

POINTS 1 **Camara** 105; 2 Nikola Tsolov 79; 3 Tim Tramnitz 70.

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN

Zandvoort 7-8 June

Race 1	**Freddie Slater** (Prema Racing)
Race 2	**Pedro Clerot** (Van Amersfoort Racing)

POINTS 1 **Slater** 83; 2 Matteo De Palo 82; 3 Enzo Deligny 75.

INDY NXT

Detroit 1 June

Dennis Hauger (Andretti Global)

St Louis 15 June

Lochie Hughes (Andretti Global)

POINTS 1 **Hauger** 273; 2 Hughes 254; 3 Caio Collet 195.

F1 ACADEMY

Montreal 14-15 June

Race 1	**Doriane Pin** (Prema Racing)
Race 2	**Emma Felbermayr** (Rodin Motorsport)
Race 3	**Chloe Chambers** (Campos Racing)

POINTS 1 **Pin** 109; 2 Chambers 89; 3 Maya Weug 72.

INSIDER

Part of Formula E's original appeal is being lost to progress, says Katy Fairman

The early concept of Formula E was simple: take racing to the city centres. The low noise levels and air pollution, combined with education on electric mobility and spectators using public transport to travel to races, made this a very appealing proposal for a host of nations.

With a promise of "the most beautiful and well-known landmarks as a spectacular backdrop for the races" from Formula E founder Alejandro Agag, it's fair to say the championship delivered in its inaugural 2014-15 season. While it was uncertain whether Formula E could survive its infancy, there's no denying the calendar sent a clear message: big cities and destinations were at the core. Beijing hosted the first race, with a street circuit formed around the grounds of the Olympic Stadium, while later rounds included Buenos Aires, Miami, Monaco, Berlin, Moscow and a season finale in London. As seasons went on, the list of prominent places grew, with Paris, New York, Hong Kong and Rome joining the party.

Formula E was even responsible for taking motor racing back to Switzerland for the first time since it was banned there following the 1955 Le Mans disaster. The Zurich E-Prix was attended by over 150,000 spectators. It was amazing to stay in the heart of these cities, hop on a bus to get to the track, or walk from the hotel to see famous monuments at night.

But as technology improved, and these electric single-seaters became quicker and more powerful, it was clear that these types of circuits might not be the safest option anymore. Cracks had started to show and, after two huge crashes in Cape Town and Rome raised concerns, more permanent facilities started to take their place.

The 2025-26 calendar continues with that theme. Venues such as the Shanghai International Circuit and the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez in Mexico City remain, alongside the addition of Jarama in Spain. These circuits weave themselves between Monaco and the Jeddah Corniche Circuit, which debuted in the series this season. Next year also appears to be the last running of the popular half-indoor, half-outdoor circuit at the London ExCeL centre, since the new generation of cars are regarded as unsuitable for the configuration. With suggestions of Silverstone or Brands Hatch replacing it, it's another step towards extinction for such quirky locations.

As someone who has been covering this championship from the start, it feels that a part of Formula E's DNA has degraded and that there's no going back. With the priority now being key markets such as China and the US, there's talk of two separate race weekends for each of those countries on future Formula E calendars. The Gen4 machine promises to be bigger and better too. Consistent four-wheel drive, 600kW power output and 700kW of regen are just some of the technical specifications for the car, which is expected to be revealed next month. As much as it's pleasing to see this development, it feels like the constant push for standout statistics has destroyed one of Formula E's original and key pillars.

Formula E CEO Jeff Dodds knows the old days are over: "There are many circuits we've raced on in our history that you simply cannot put that car on safely. I'm not interested in building this car and then turning the power down and saying, 'Oh, we'll just race it with half the power'. That wouldn't work for me."

It's understood that the technology does exist to create a modular Formula E car, on which power output could be adjusted to reduce speeds. While for many this idea seems backwards, it could soften the disappointment of drivers who thrive on the challenges of street circuits.

"In the 2014-15 calendar, we didn't have any permanent tracks so there's definitely been a change on that," admits FE co-founder and chief championship officer Alberto Longo. "But that change is driven by the fact that these cars are more challenging to race in the heart of the biggest cities of the world. Paris, for example, it would be amazing to be racing there [again], but we can't because the streets are just not wide enough or safe enough for us.

> *"It feels like the push for standout statistics has destroyed one of Formula E's key pillars"*

"Our DNA remains intact, and every time we go to a city, we try to find a location in the middle of it, or at least a street track, but for us it's more important to be racing in key markets. That prevails over racing in the city centre."

Street circuits are not cheap to research and install. But what price does the championship pay for being further from those it's targeting? As Formula 1 seems to be obsessed with introducing street circuits at the expense of traditional venues, its electric counterpart appears to be going in the opposite direction.

'26 WINTER SERIES

GEDLICH racing

Save the dates!

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INFO & REGISTRATION
winter-series.com

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Europe's premiere Winter Racing Series; proof that racing has no off-season

Winter Series '26 by GEDLICH Racing

TWO RISING STARS BATTLING FOR HOME HONOURS

Luke Browning and Arvid Lindblad both have links with F1 teams and are part of a close battle at the top of the F2 table

KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY **GETTY IMAGES**

Two Britons will head to their home event at Silverstone in the middle of the Formula 2 title fight. Both are rookies, both have been successful on their way up the single-seater ladder and both *could* make it onto the F1 grid in the not-too-distant future.

Red Bull junior Arvid Lindblad and Williams Racing Driver Academy member Luke Browning were race winners in F3 and have stepped up to the 620bhp Dallara F2 2024. Five podiums in the first nine races put Browning into the points lead, but a scrappy weekend in Spain dropped the Hitech GP driver to fifth in the standings. Lindblad, already a sprint winner, took pole by a quarter of a second at Barcelona with Campos Racing and then consummately controlled the feature race to move up to third in the championship.

Just 14 points cover Rodin Motorsport's impressive Irish rookie Alex Dunne, MP Motorsport's Dutch veteran Richard Verschoor (now in his *fifth* season of F2!), Lindblad, American Jak Crawford (DAMS) and Browning ahead of the halfway point at the Red Bull Ring.

It's been a rapid rise for 17-year-old Lindblad. In 2023, his first full season of car racing, he was a frontrunner in Italian F4, then he skipped the Formula Regional European/GB3 level to go straight into F3. Point proved there, Lindblad was always likely to be tested in F2 by Red Bull. He's therefore accustomed to big leaps from season to season.

"The F2 is bigger, more powerful and a bit more downforce than F3, but I would say the step is smaller than from F4 to F3," explains Lindblad. "I've been pushed very quickly through the categories, always sort of being the youngest. As soon as I was eligible to go up to the next category, I went. So, I'm very used to being pushed quite hard and making big steps. I know how to deal with these sorts of challenges.

"I'd say the biggest thing is that the level is higher. It's the future of F1, we're the closest to that. And then there are the new things with pitstops, with the tyre compounds, the way the feature races are – there's quite a lot to learn."

At 23, Browning has had a longer journey, all the way from Junior Saloons and Ginetta Junior, via winning the UK-based GB3 championship. "I think it's an interesting journey between F4, F3, F2," reckons the 2020 British F4 champion, who started six F2 races for ART Grand Prix at the end of last year. "The ladder to climb is difficult and can fall from under your feet pretty quickly.

"They're very, very different cars. We've done a lot of preparation for F2 and we've been ready. Back end of last year, coming off F3, we weren't ready. It shows you what the last couple of months of prep can do before heading into the season."

Following Lindblad's Spanish victory, the FIA approved Red Bull's request for him to be granted a superlicence before he reaches the usual minimum age of 18. It means he can now be a reserve driver and is one step closer to getting his hands on contemporary F1 machinery.

> ***"I've been pushed very quickly through the categories, always sort of being the youngest"***

"The only step higher now is F1 and it's pretty cool to be moving up," says Lindblad, who adds that he is not fazed by Red Bull's reputation for spitting out promising drivers. "I don't really think about the pressure. Red Bull is known to be cut-throat, yes. But my perception is, isn't everything? If you don't perform in your job, you get fired. If I don't perform in mine, I get fired. And it's the same in all sport.

"The reality is, I think if I do a good job, then I'll be fine. In the end, I want to be a Formula 1 world champion. I'm here for myself. I started this journey »

Lindblad's rapid rise means he's used to "making big steps"

SUTTON/FORMULA1

...while Browning has had a longer journey, starting in Junior Saloons

SUTTON/FORMULA1

CV HIGHLIGHTS

ARVID LINDBLAD

2025	Formula Regional Oceania champion with M2 (6 wins)
2024	4th in F3 with Prema (4 wins); Silverstone Autosport BRDC Award finalist
2023	3rd in Italian F4 (6 wins), 4th in Euro 4 (1 win) and Macau F4 winner with Prema; Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award finalist

LUKE BROWNING

2024	3rd in F3 with Hitech (2 wins)
2023	Macau GP winner with Hitech
2022	GB3 champion with Hitech (5 wins); Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner
2021	3rd in ADAC F4 with US Racing (2 wins)
2020	British F4 champion with Fortec (7 wins)

when I was five, and that was my goal from the beginning. So, it doesn't really affect me too much."

While both are clearly aiming for the F2 crown, they answer the question of, 'What is your target for 2025?' in slightly different ways.

Lindblad: "I don't really want to think about the championship, but I'd be lying if I said that it's not on my radar. We know in F2 things can change very quickly. It's a very challenging championship, so it's going to be about doing the basics well and trying to perform well every weekend, which is much easier said than done.

"Being in the game every weekend is going to be the important thing and then we'll see where we end up. The biggest thing is continuing to improve."

> ***"I'm getting the opportunity to drive F1 cars now on race weekends, which is cool"***

Browning is unequivocal about trying to follow in the footsteps of Charles Leclerc, George Russell and Oscar Piastri, who all won the F2 title in their rookie seasons: "I've been told by [Williams team boss] James Vowles I need to win it. And why not? I think I'm experienced enough now.

"If you want to be in F1, you need to be exceptional. And what does exceptional look like at this stage? Exceptional looks like winning the championship in your first year. It's not an easy task, but it's one that gets me excited and one that makes me want to drive."

Browning has already performed for Williams on a grand prix weekend, having taken part in FP1 in Abu Dhabi last year and Bahrain in April, with more outings planned. "I'm getting the opportunity to drive F1 cars now on race weekends, which is cool, I'm living a bit of a dream at the moment," continues Browning.

"The obvious goal is they want me to be an F1 driver at some point. They've got an interest in my career. And it's all about the progression. At the end of this year, they want to see a finished product. And that's my goal, too.

"If you have a look through my career, you'd probably go, 'OK, the kid's quite quick, naturally talented, maybe a little bit too aggressive sometimes, crashing when unnecessary.' But how can you hone that to make a championship title and to put it together?

"Usually in the lower formulas, the raw pace can get you through to win the championship. But in F3 and F2, it doesn't. So, it's approaching it in a different way and accepting when points are points. And showing James, showing the team, showing the whole F1 paddock, that I'm a finished product. And what that looks like is consistency."

He's managed that so far and views Barcelona as a blip because the pace was still decent: "We were coming home in P2 in the sprint race and a safety car comes out in the last five laps. We didn't have the time to box because the safety car came out as we were coming just before the last corner. So it was just past the pit cut-off time."

The result was Browning finished sixth, before contact and a penalty kept him out of the points in the feature race.

Hitech boss Oliver Oakes has been a big supporter of Browning, who has raced with the team since 2022. Browning believes Oakes's recent troubles – resigning from his job as Alpine team principal and brother William's arrest – has had no impact on the F2 effort. "I think it's been completely dissociated from Oli to personal matters and to the team," he asserts. "It's not affected us in the slightest. And Oli's been like a dad to me; he's such a fantastic guy and I've got so much to thank him for. He's resumed the role at Hitech and maybe that's just in good time for the end of the championship."

And so to Silverstone. Lindblad and Browning have very different experiences from their home F3 round last year. Browning took pole for the feature race and led in the wet but was overwhelmed by those on slicks as the track dried late on. One of those was Lindblad, who inherited victory when Callum Voisin copped a penalty for overtaking off-track. That completed a rare double, Lindblad having comfortably won the sprint the day before.

"Last year was extremely special, it was an amazing moment and something I'll remember forever," smiles Lindblad. "But regardless of that, driving the circuit and being at home was just really enjoyable.

"I'm not going into the weekend expecting to do the same, because that almost never happens. But Isack [Hadjar] was on pole and won the feature race [with Lindblad's team Campos] there last year, so the team has a really good car and we're gelling better as well, me and the team. I have full confidence that we'll be really fast and we'll be challenging at the sharp end.

"The Copse, Maggotts and Becketts section is very special. In F3, that was really amazing to drive, so we'll see if it's going to be even more enjoyable in the F2."

Browning admits to being "still sour" about last year's Silverstone outcome, but is a fan of the circuit, upon which he won the 2022 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award: "Maggotts and Becketts are so special, but I also think, funnily enough, that Luffield is just fantastic because of the line you take through there over the kerb, holding it tight, when you're really powering through and you're feeling the grip of the tyre all the way out. I think it's a corner like no other in the world."

Lindblad and Browning are also part of the British Racing Drivers' Club's SuperStars programme and there is clearly mutual respect. But there's also a little distance, perhaps necessary in such a competitive environment.

"Everyone's here to win, aren't they?" summarises Browning. "As much as you can smile at each other around the paddock and you can have the respect for the other drivers, we all know what we're here for. I don't think anyone is blind to that."

AUTOSPORT
RACING

Hear more from Lindblad, Browning and other rising stars on the Autosport Racing Podcast channel: **autosport.com/podcast/**

Lindblad won the feature race from pole at Barcelona

GRIFFITHS/FORMULA1

Browning's focus is on completing the F2 season as a "finished product"...

MASON

...having delivered the title that Vowles has said he needs to win

PIERSE

Rodin rookie Dunne heads points ahead of Red Bull Ring round

J SUTTON/FORMULA1

Browning "living a bit of a dream" with F1 practice outings

SUTTON/FORMULA1

PREPARATION AT FULL THROTTLE FOR A THRILLING 2026 GEDLICH RACING WINTER SERIES

The GEDLICH Racing Winter Series will once again tour Portugal and Spain's most revered racing venues throughout the first-quarter of 2026.

Preparations and new initiatives are already in full-swing from the Frankfurt-based organiser, after a successful 2025 Winter Series. The established GT, GT4, Formula and Prototype grids will remain in 2026, alongside an exciting new series and the second edition of the 6H of Portimao.

INTRODUCING... THE NOVA WINTER SERIES!

For 2026, a fifth championship has been added to the GEDLICH Racing portfolio, in the form of the Nova Winter Series. The series is focused on the Nova NP02 prototype, running on Goodyear tyres. With a focus on endurance racing, the Nova Winter Series will be held across three events with two- and three-hour distances at the Autódromo Portimão and Valencia's Circuit Ricardo Tormo. The Nova NP02 is a reliable and cost-effective high-powered prototype race car. With its Ford Coyote V8 engine, the NP02 offers a hugely competitive performance-to-cost ratio. GEDLICH is setting out to appeal to endurance racing competitors with a set of regulations designed to provide a thrilling competitive platform.

ESTORIL WELCOMES THE FORMULA WINTER SERIES

The Formula Winter Series calendar has grown to five events for 2026 , as the famed Circuito Estoril has been added to the calendar. This marks the first appearance for GEDLICH Racing's Tatuus T-421 category at the former Portuguese Grand Prix venue.

The enthusiastic local motorsport crowd always arrive in impressive numbers, and will now have the opportunity to witness stars of the future duelling in the highly-competitive Formula Winter Series.

Estoril joins Portimão, Valencia, Aragon and Barcelona on the 2026 calendar.

GT AND GT4 WINTER SERIES: POPULAR 2025 CHANGES SOLIDIFIED FOR THE NEW YEAR

The pair of GT grids in the Winter Series paddock have developed a strong competitor base, and the previous season was the most competitive yet.

For 2025, the GT Winter Series adopted the Stephane Ratel Organisation's Balance of Performance for the first time in the GT2 and GT3 classes, as well as Pirelli P-Zero tyres. These well-received changes will carry over to 2026, as GEDLICH Racing continues to curate a platform appealing to competitors at the highest levels of GT racing.

The winning formula of the SRO-licenced GT4 Winter Series will also remain, after a thrilling sophomore season. The series is set to attract Europe's leading GT4 squadrons again in 2026.

WINTER SERIES
FWS
FORMULA WINTER SERIES

A NEW ERA OF LMP3 IN THE PROTOTYPE WINTER SERIES

After bidding farewell to the V8-era of LMP3 at the conclusion of the 2025 Prototype Winter Series, the GEDLICH Racing paddock will welcome the new generation cars onto the grid in 2026.

For teams competing in series waiting a further season to part ways with the second-generation cars, the Prototype Winter Series will present a golden opportunity to gain mileage and experience in the recently-introduced Oreca-Toyota V6 machines.

GEDLICH 6H OF PORTIMÃO: AN EARLY-SEASON ENDURANCE OFFERING IN EUROPE

After a compelling and well-received 2025 edition of the GEDLICH Racing 6H of Portimão, the long-distance GT and touring car event will return in 2026.

The second edition of the race will be held from 5-8 February, and serves as a great option for endurance racing teams looking to compete at the start of the calendar year, without the hassle of trans-continental freight. Everything from GT2 and GT3 machines to high-performance touring cars will be eligible for the event.

After a dominant 2025 performance from Razoon – more than racing's Porsche 992 GT3 R, in the hands of Simon Birch and Thomas Andersen, who will claim the crown in the second-running of the event?

TRACKSIDE FAN ACCESS AND LIVESTREAMING IN 2026

For the last two seasons, a successful partnership between GEDLICH and live broadcast specialists Alpha Live has revolutionised coverage of Winter Series events.

For the upcoming season, this partnership will continue. Fans from across the world can watch every race of the 2026 Winter Series as it happens, with expert broadcast contributions from leading commentators and presenters. In addition, Winter Series events will once again be open to the public, with reasonably-priced tickets to suit any budget. Fans will be treated to pit walks and opportunities to meet the past, present and future stars of motorsport, as GEDLICH strives to offer a haven for supporters at a time where European racing is near-dormant.

RETURNING FACES AND NEW CONTENDERS SET TO FORM COMPELLING 2026 GRIDS

At this early stage, the 2026 Winter Series grids already look to be among the strongest yet. Expressions of interest have been received from established Winter Series participants, as well as new entrants that could disturb the established order at the sharp end.

As always, teams that join the GEDLICH Racing Winter Series will be treated to unparalleled levels of track time across four-day meetings. Additionally, GEDLICH's Race Test and Endless Summer trackday initiatives offer the opportunity to gain even more vital data and mileage at Southern Europe's most prestigious venues.

The 2026 GEDLICH Racing Winter Series will kick off at the Autodromo Internacional do Algarve from 15-18 January.

CADILLAC
CADILLAC
38
ertz

Caddy's calm before the storm

Cadillac's expanded entry features in this shot of the field for the 93rd running of the Le Mans 24 Hours. The #38 factory Jota V-Series.R of Earl Bamber, Sebastien Bourdais and Jenson Button sits behind its Toyota and Alpine rivals in the 21-strong Hypercar class, and ahead of the #5 Porsche Penske Motorsport 963 of Michael Christensen, Mathieu Jaminet and Julien Andlauer. Qualifying went well for Cadillac, with Bamber completing a 1-2 behind poleman Alex Lynn. But the race was less positive for the marque – see our report overleaf.

Photographer Jakob Ebrey/JEP/ Getty Images

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WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP RACE DEBRIEF

WEC **HYPERCAR** LMP2 LMGT3

FERRARI DOMINATES AS KUBICA LEADS THE WAY

PHOTOGRAPHY **GETTY IMAGES**

ORLEN
RICHARD MILLE

Victorious 'customer car' Ferrari crew accepts the plaudits

Ferrari made it three out of three at the Le Mans 24 Hours since its comeback to the top of the sportscar tree. Yet its victory in the World Endurance Championship blue riband this time around was quite different from those that preceded it after its factory return to the prototype ranks. For a start, the honours went to the yellow Ferrari, the so-called customer car run, like the factory machines, by AF Corse. But more to the point, Ferrari was dominant in a way that it wasn't in 2023 or 2024.

The irony was that the margin of victory was closer than in each of the past two years. The winning 499P Le Mans Hypercar shared by Robert Kubica, Yifei Ye and Phil Hanson claimed honours by a fraction less than last year, 14.084 seconds compared with 14.221s – in 2023 its margin was up at over a minute. But a Ferrari

»

HYPERCAR RACE PACE

AVERAGE OF TOP 10 FASTEST LAPS		
1	**Nicklas Nielsen** (#50)	3m27.218s
2	**Antonio Fuoco** (#50)	3m27.249s
3	**Robert Kubica** (#83)	3m27.267s
4	**Antonio Giovinazzi** (#51)	3m27.325s
5	**Alex Lynn** (#12)	3m27.539s
6	**Sebastien Bourdais** (#38)	3m27.552s

AVERAGE OF TOP 30 FASTEST LAPS		
1	**Robert Kubica** (#83)	3m27.944s
2	**Antonio Fuoco** (#50)	3m27.999s
3	**Nicklas Nielsen** (#50)	3m28.060s
4	**Antonio Giovinazzi** (#51)	3m28.073s
5	**Kamui Kobayashi** (#7)	3m28.162s
6	**Alex Lynn** (#12)	3m28.225s

AVERAGE OF TOP 50 FASTEST LAPS		
1	**Robert Kubica** (#83)	3m28.302s
2	**Antonio Fuoco** (#50)	3m28.476s
3	**Antonio Giovinazzi** (#51)	3m28.489s
4	**Nicklas Nielsen** (#50)	3m28.558s
5	**Kamui Kobayashi** (#7)	3m28.560s
6	**Sebastien Bourdais** (#38)	3m28.668s

24h
LE MANS
11 AU 15 JUIN 2025
MICHELIN
ROLEX
MOTUL

Jota Cadillacs could not deliver on their qualifying pace

McMASTER/LAT

victory never really looked in doubt from two or three hours into the race as its satellite entry and the two red factory cars that ended up third and fourth on the road monopolised the top of the leaderboard. The 499Ps between them led 277 of event's 387 laps.

The 499P was the fastest thing around the 8.47-mile Circuit de la Sarthe over the course of the 93rd edition of the 24 Hours. It was fast enough to beat the best of the Porsche 963 LMDhs driven by Kevin Estre, Laurens Vanthoor and Matt Campbell – and it should have been more comfortable than it was – and significantly faster than everything else.

Predictions that this was going to be a race fought out by perhaps five or six of the Hypercar class manufacturers proved ill-founded. Toyota, the marque that had pushed Ferrari so hard in 2023 and 2024, was not in the game, and neither were Cadillac, Alpine and BMW. That was the harsh reality, even if Caddy did have a car among the five that finished on the lead lap.

Porsche was in the mix, though only for short periods of the race – including the all-important crunch laps as the clock ticked down. But it owed its position in among the Ferraris as much to the issues the Italian cars encountered along the way as its own pace. The #6 Porsche finished the race without a scratch upon its bodywork, and its solitary delay came with a slow puncture early in the race. That wasn't the case for the Ferrari flotilla.

Each of the Ferraris had to take penalties for various offences over the course of the race, and there were offs and technical issues, too. Whether they ultimately decided the outcome of the race is difficult to say, because the fastest 499P won. The #83 car had the edge on the #51 entry shared by James Calado, Antonio Giovinazzi and Alessandro Pier Guidi that ended up third, and #50 driven by Antonio Fuoco, Nicklas Nielsen and Miguel Molina, which was subsequently disqualified when it failed the rear wing deflection test.

Fastest of the nine Ferrari drivers over the race was Kubica, with #83 having the narrowest of edges when all three drivers were taken into consideration. The Formula 1 race winner had a couple of tenths on the two Antonios, Fuoco and Giovinazzi, the fastest drivers respectively in #50 and #51. The trio of cars from the Prancing Horse were, meanwhile, separated by mere hundredths on the averages of all three drivers.

Kubica and co's factory 'team-mates' were happy to concede that the winning Ferrari was the quicker car, and had been since the Test Day on the Sunday ahead of race week. "Since the test, we knew they had something on us and their speed was impressive," said Calado. "We were struggling with the balance of the car,

Ferrari
51
RICHARD MILLE
V-Power

Third-place finishing #51 Ferrari could only qualify 11th

EBREY/LAT

#6 Porsche turned up the wick towards the end, although crew never felt in a position to win

EBREY/LAT

weren't particularly happy with the rear end, myself more than Gio and Ale. We thought the race would be cooler and the rear grip would come, but it never did."

Kubica revealed that he felt confident over the final couple of hours despite the close proximity of the Porsche. "I knew what I was playing for," said the 40-year-old, who was in the cockpit of the #83 car for almost three hours at the end. "I knew that without a mistake, a technical issue or a DNF, I could bring it home. I'm happy that I didn't do any mistakes after driving a lot of hours."

"It's a big one and I'm happy to have the Rolex," he said of the victory and the watch given to the overall winners. "I went to the Daytona 24 Hours to win a watch [in 2021] and it didn't work out. When we retired here on the last lap in 2021 [in his maiden Le Mans with WRT], I was convinced the LMP2 winners got a Rolex. When I was told they didn't I felt a bit better about it. This is special, to have the win and the Rolex."

It wasn't all plain sailing for the drivers of the #83. Ye was bumped out of qualifying in the Hyperpole 1 session on Thursday. He encountered a mechanical issue, a leak of some kind that wasn't fully explained, that left him 13th on the grid. The #83 was joined on the sidelines for 'H2' by #51, in which Pier Guidi ended up 11th on what turned out to be a bad day for Ferrari: Fuoco could only put the #50 car seventh in the final round. That wasn't what was expected from the kings of WEC qualifying.

There was also a gearbox issue, affecting the downshift, that had to be carried through the race, two penalties and a quick off for Hanson at Mulsanne Corner during the night. The one and only safety car of the race, which occurred in hour 11, didn't help either. The customer Ferrari lost an advantage of nearly two minutes over #51 and more than that over #50 as a result.

The third-place Ferrari bore the brunt of Ferrari's problems. Among its delay was a 20s penalty for exceeding the pitlane speed limit by 13km/h (8mph), but the turning point in its race came just after 11am on Sunday. Pier Guidi had been running at the front with 20 or so seconds over Ye when he was required to make an emergency stop for a splash of fuel during a quick-fire Full Course Yellow virtual safety car. On his way back in for his stop proper at the end of the next lap, he looped it in the pitlane entry. A 20s lead became a 25s deficit, with Pier Guidi now in third behind #50.

There was another problem for #51 over the final stages. Ferrari had to manage an engine issue, which it didn't fully explain though suggested it was linked to the flat-out nature of a race undertaken in hotter than usual

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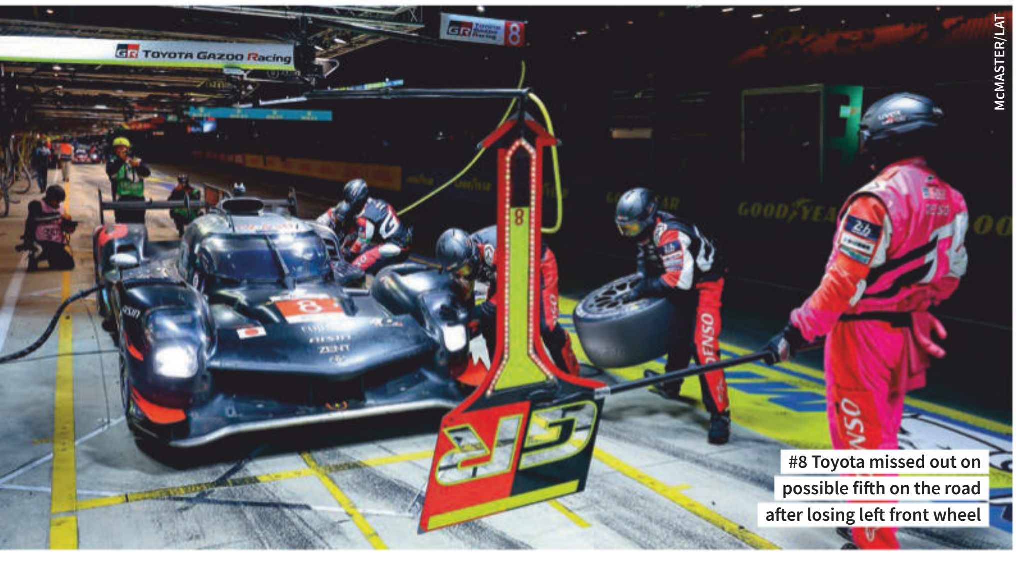


McMASTER/LAT

#8 Toyota missed out on possible fifth on the road after losing left front wheel

#50 Ferrari finished fourth on the road before failing rear wing deflection test

EBREY/LAT

temperatures. It was "an incidental issue that required monitoring", said Ferrari sportscar racing technical director Ferdinando Cannizzo, but one that "didn't cost any performance". Yet the #51 car ended up third after getting past the #50 when Fuoco went off on his out-lap following his final pitstop.

The myriad problems that allowed the Porsche to get ahead of the works Ferraris meant there was no chance for any team orders to be invoked. Radio communications broadcast in the final hours suggested it was something in mind, and it is the case that Hanson was asked to move over for a red car during the night. He didn't do so, though his off at Mulsanne shortly after the request removed the need.

Porsche was in the mix only for short periods of the race and, beyond the first couple of hours, only with the #6 Porsche Penske Motorsport entry that finished second. On Sunday morning it appeared that Estre and Vanthoor, with new team-mate Campbell, were going to repeat the car's fourth place from last year until it came alive in the final hours.

The Porsche was at its most competitive in the heat of the day, witness the opening exchanges. Julien Andlauer took the #5 car into the lead from third on the grid, while Estre made amazing progress from the rear of the Hypercar pack: he'd been thrown to the back of the grid when his Porsche had been found to be underweight after opening qualifying on Wednesday.

As the race entered its final stages, the #6 car switched strategies. It went from tripling the medium-compound Michelin tyre to doubles and definitely no fuel saving. "It was full push, quali lap after quali lap," said Estre, who drove to the flag. "That was our only chance against Ferrari: to try to put pressure on them. They had the upper hand by so much that it would have been strange for them to lose all of that advantage in the last couple of hours. Second is a good result, but I'm not pretending we were in contention to win. It looks close on paper, but that's because they made a lot of mistakes."

The kind of errors that Ferrari made also removed any chance the other two PPM entries had of a top six. The #5 car shared by Michael Christensen, Andlauer and Mathieu Jaminet ended up a lap down in seventh, the additional entry for Le Mans shared by Nick Tandy, Felipe Nasr and Pascal Wehrlein ninth. There were a couple of penalties for the former and an unlucky sequence of events for the latter around the halfway mark. The car lost time in a Slow Zone, a local FCY, then with an emergency pitstop in an FCY and finally during the solo safety car.

Even if Porsche didn't have a car to beat the Ferrari, it was well clear of the rest of the pack. Twelve months before, Estre and Vanthoor, then sharing with Andre Lotterer, languished some way behind Ferrari and Toyota. This time, the 963 was a more raceable machine thanks to increased straightline speed, a result of Porsche's efforts that included an aero revision for this year under the evo joker rules to which it finally admitted at Le Mans. There was also a bit of help from the power gain element of the Balance of Performance, which adjusts maximum power above 250km/h (155mph): Porsche had plus 1.4% power this year, whereas last year it neither lost nor gained.

There were two kinds of car at Le Mans in 2025, reckoned Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director David Floury: those that were quick in a straight line and those that weren't. And Porsche was in the good kind along with Ferrari. Questioned after a race in which the best of the GR010 HYBRID LMHs, #7 shared by Kamui Kobayashi, Mike Conway and Nyck de Vries, crossed the line sixth and ultimately took fifth, Floury replied: "From Tertre Rouge to the first chicane, from the first chicane to the second chicane…" You get the idea.

Toyota had a significant increase in its base power – it was up on the 520kW (697bhp) class maximum but lost 1.3% of it above 250. Ferrari had a minus 2.9% figure, yet was quickest through the speed trap on the first leg of the Mulsanne Straight. It tried to play down its advantage, pointing out that the official top speed table can be distorted by who got a tow and who didn't. The #50 and #51 cars were at its top on 349km/h dead (217mph), and across

Route to the top step of the podium wasn't plain sailing for Ye, Hanson and Kubica

TANNEAU/AFP

the race they were regularly above 340.

Toyota might have taken fifth on the road from the #12 Jota Cadillac V-Series.R LMDh with #8. The car shared by Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa ended up 15th after losing 20 minutes with a slow lap and some quick repairs after the Japanese driver lost his front left wheel coming out of the pits in hour 21. Toyota didn't go into detail about the problem, only pointing out that one of the team's wheel change mechanics had been injured at a previous pitstop and had been taken to hospital.

Cadillac didn't deliver on the one-lap pace that allowed Alex Lynn and Earl Bamber to lock out the front row for Jota. The Caddy didn't have the race pace of the Ferrari or the Porsche, but team boss Sam Hignett still reckoned it was a good day for an operation in only its fourth race with the Caddy. He also pointed out that the car was nearer the pace than last year. It was around three tenths shy of the Ferrari, compared with over a second when Chip Ganassi Racing was running the programme.

Everyone else was a bit player at Le Mans this year. And that included Alpine and BMW, two manufacturers that took the fight to Ferrari the previous time out in the WEC at Spa in May.

ROSLAN/NURPHOTO

Valkyrie lacked pace, but reaching the finish was seen as progress

The #35 A424 LMDh shared by Charles Milesi, Ferdinand Habsburg and Paul-Loup Chatin snuck into the points with 10th, which became ninth, after fighting back from two early penalties and hybrid cooling issue.

The two WRT BMW M Hybrid V8 LMDhs both made long pitstops in the closing hours. The issue for #15 was hybrid cooling, while engine-related problems hit #20, resulting in 31st and 17th overall respectively. Only the Action Express Racing and Wayne Taylor Racing Cadillacs were behind the team as non-finishers. Both went out with engine failures, which appear to have been identical.

Peugeot wasn't on the pace with its 9X8 2024 LMH. It was down on power and up on weight in the Le Mans-specific BoP from class maximum and minimums with which it has been a regular podium challenger in WEC since the end of last year. Aston Martin also wasn't on the pace with the Valkyrie, but it reckoned getting two cars to the finish with no problems save for a couple of slow punctures was a step in the right direction.

That's something that WEC organisers the Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA didn't manage for Le Mans this year. They were further from the money on the BoP than last June, even with a year's worth of experience with power gain after its introduction last year. Le Mans 2025 wasn't the race the world had been hoping for.

GARY WATKINS

Fifteenth hour was last time #92 Porsche was not leading

EBREY/LAT

WEC HYPERCAR LMP2 **LMGT3**

LIETZ LEADS PORSCHE TO LMGT3 SUCCESS... AGAIN

Prior to the start of last season, Porsche factory stalwart Richard Lietz thought his racing days were over. With the advent of the new LMGT3 class joining the World Endurance Championship, and the Austrian having just turned 40, he believed the next generation of sportscar stars would be the ones in demand.

"I was basically ready to stop driving," Lietz recalled. "And then Manthey mechanics actually called me and asked if I wanted to drive for them. I was like, 'What do you mean? In WEC you will take a young one.' And then another mechanic called me and another mechanic and an engineer, and then the bosses called. At one point I was like, 'OK, maybe they are serious.'"

They certainly were. So serious, in fact, that Lietz ended up taking a fifth GT class win at Le Mans alongside Morris Schuring and Yasser Shahin. And now he has done it again.

In 2024, the Manthey Porsche 911 GT3-R crew was pretty dominant, leading all but four of the last 76 laps. But that was nothing compared to this time around. Forget 76 laps – the #92 Porsche that Lietz now shared with Riccardo Pera and Ryan Hardwick locked out top spot for all of the last 134 tours. For context, the last time it was not out front – even during the pitstop cycle – was in the 15th hour.

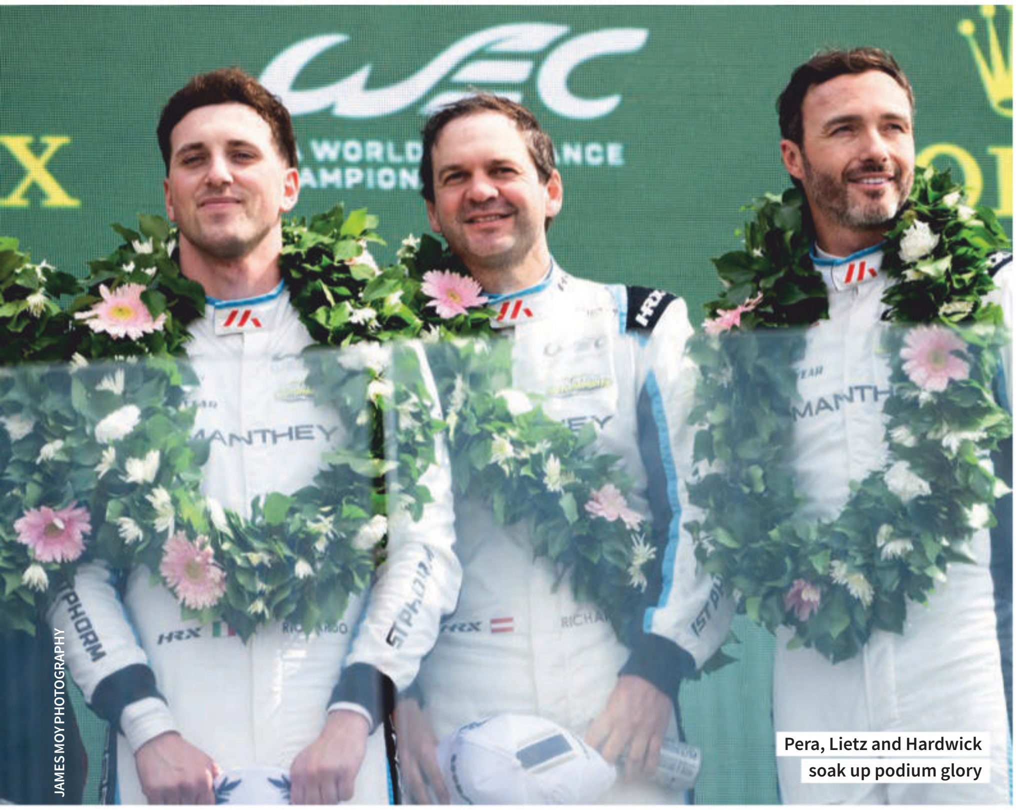
"This year was a bit more prepared than last year," Lietz acknowledged. "If you get really surprised it's like a Christmas present [winning in 2024], now we achieved what we wanted. The first back-to-back wins at Le Mans for myself is something special."

But, for all those laps led, and the eventual 33-second winning margin, the race was not always destined to be another Lietz Porsche victory. Instead, the key car in the opening stages was the #46 WRT BMW M4. Ahmad Al Harthy first moved the BMW into the lead inside the second hour, and it spent much of the first half of the race either out front or only a few seconds behind as Kelvin van der Linde and Valentino Rossi continued to deliver.

But things turned sour during the night when Rossi took to the Porsche Curves gravel amid electrical issues that caused a loss of power steering. The M4 was eventually recovered to the garage and a fix was attempted by the Belgian team, but the doctoring could not

Runner-up #21 Ferrari couldn't match Porsche's greater consistency

JAMES MOY PHOTOGRAPHY



Pera, Lietz and Hardwick soak up podium glory

prevent retirement shortly afterwards.

Other cars did then take up the mantle and fight the metronomic Porsche. A charging night stint from Charlie Eastwood and the race's sole safety car helped propel the TF Sport Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R into the lead. It was a position that belied what the Northern Irishman called pre-race "doom and gloom" in the American manufacturer's camp amid a lack of straightline speed. But the Corvette that Eastwood shared with Rui Andrade and Tom van Rompuy could not sustain such a lofty position and eventually finished third – a result Andrade described as unexpected.

"As a package, the car felt really good but there are things out of our control that hindered us a bit," he said in reference to the three-letter acronym that must not be named. "But, as a team, we fought through it all and did a perfect execution. We had really good pace when we were by ourselves but the raceability was tough. This podium for me feels like a win because of it."

Other Corvette drivers were less diplomatic earlier in the race. Daniel Juncadella from the sister TF car – which led the WEC standings into the event, but lost two laps due to a stubborn wheelnut – had said "we are participating at Le Mans because competing is another thing" in reference to the straightline struggles.

Next to fight the Manthey Porsche was the AF Corse Ferrari 296 GT3 that had qualified second but slipped back in the early stages with Francois Heriau at the wheel, in contrast to pros in many of the leading machines. But the pace of Alessio Rovera brought it back into contention before the greater consistency of the Porsche told. "I think we did the maximum we could today," said Simon Mann, the Ferrari's silver driver. "You always want to win – especially at Le Mans – but P2 is not bad either, especially considering it's such a competitive field."

Much of the pre-race talk centred around the pace of Lexus, and the ASP squad's pair of RC Fs were both in contention early on. The #78 machine grabbed the lead when Mattia Drudi handed the polesitting Heart of Racing Aston Martin Vantage over to team boss Ian James at the first round of pitstops. But both Lexus crews began to drift back and the #78 retired from fourth when Finn Gehrsitz crashed, while a late drive-through for a full-course-yellow infringement left the sister car fifth. The HOR Aston was ultimately fourth, while the Racing Spirit of Leman Vantage also featured strongly in the early stages before losing 13 minutes with an engine system issue.

Third-place Corvette hampered by lack of straightline speed

All of this left the Manthey Porsche in control, but it was not the outright fastest. Although it featured strongly in the speed trap figures, the Aston with Drudi at the wheel set the best lap – Pera and Lietz were half a second adrift. Instead, Lietz believes that the way the Porsche looked after its tyres over three stints was a key factor in a triumph that has catapulted him, Pera and Hardwick (seeking a world car racing title to add to his global jet ski success) into the WEC points lead.

But ask Lietz if he thinks a hat-trick is now possible, and he is not so sure. "My contract ends and I'm 41 years old and there's a lot of young people out there who want my job," he sighed. "It depends on Porsche – it's not my decision if I'm here next year."

Grabbing two further class wins in the two years since he was first pondering retirement is some achievement. Don't bet against him coming back to seek even more.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

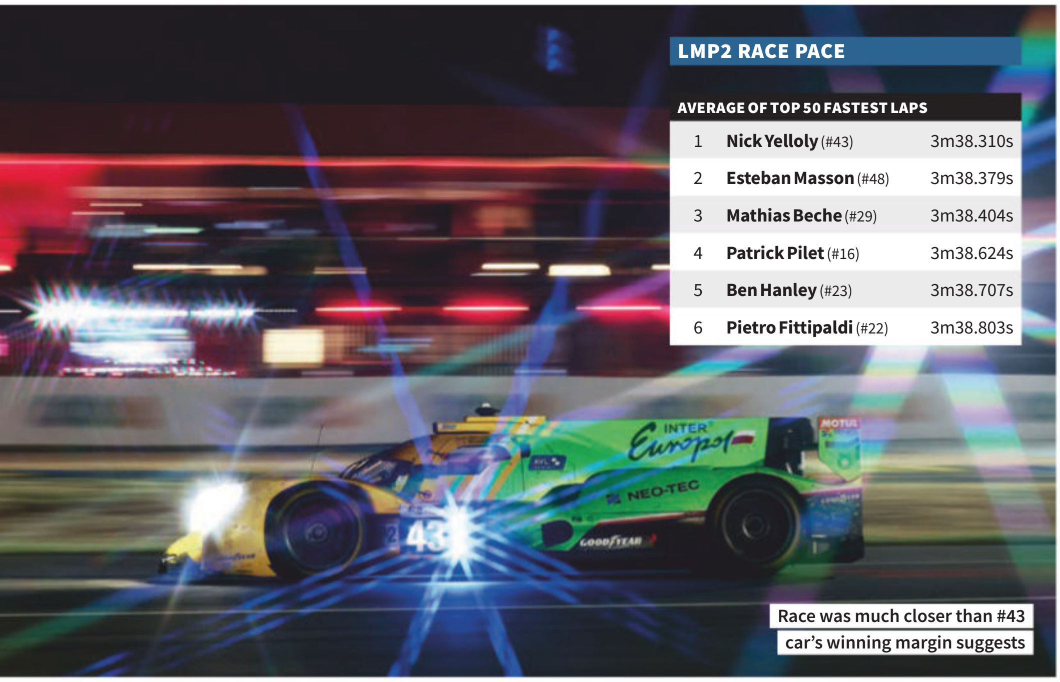
LMGT3 RACE PACE

AVERAGE OF TOP 10 FASTEST LAPS		
1	**Alessio Rovera** (#21)	3m56.152s
2	**Jose Maria Lopez** (#87)	3m56.220s
3	**Riccardo Pera** (#92)	3m56.340s
4	**Mattia Drudi** (#27)	3m56.428s
5	**Valentin Hasse-Clot** (#10)	3m56.450s
6	**Daniel Serra** (#57)	3m56.503s

AVERAGE OF TOP 30 FASTEST LAPS		
1	**Alessio Rovera** (#21)	3m56.667s
2	**Jose Maria Lopez** (#87)	3m56.692s
3	**Mattia Drudi** (#27)	3m56.877s
4	**Riccardo Pera** (#92)	3m56.931s
5	**Charlie Eastwood** (#81)	3m56.960s
6	**Daniel Serra** (#57)	3m57.025s

AVERAGE OF TOP 50 FASTEST LAPS		
1	**Alessio Rovera** (#21)	3m57.117s
2	**Jose Maria Lopez** (#87)	3m57.129s
3	**Mattia Drudi** (#27)	3m57.147s
4	**Charlie Eastwood** (#81)	3m57.228s
5	**Riccardo Pera** (#92)	3m57.282s
6	**Daniel Serra** (#57)	3m57.345s

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES



LMP2 RACE PACE

AVERAGE OF TOP 50 FASTEST LAPS

1	**Nick Yelloly** (#43)	3m38.310s
2	**Esteban Masson** (#48)	3m38.379s
3	**Mathias Beche** (#29)	3m38.404s
4	**Patrick Pilet** (#16)	3m38.624s
5	**Ben Hanley** (#23)	3m38.707s
6	**Pietro Fittipaldi** (#22)	3m38.803s

Race was much closer than #43 car's winning margin suggests

EBREY/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

HYPERCAR LMP2 LMGT3

INTER EUROPOL TAKES LATE LMP2 WIN IN THRILLING TWO-HORSE RACE

The results suggest that the Inter Europol ORECA-Gibson 07 of Nick Yelloly, Tom Dillmann and Jakub Smiechowski enjoyed a comfortable win of almost two minutes over the similar VDS Panis entry of Esteban Masson, Oliver Gray and Franck Perera in the LMP2 class of the 2025 Le Mans 24 Hours. But that does not tell even a tenth of the story of a thrilling encounter.

These two crews were simply the class of a competitive 17-strong LMP2 field. That the pair were not once outside of the top two spots during the race's final 10 hours is clear evidence of that. And, what's more, they spent much of those 10 hours separated by a handful of seconds.

Yes, the lack of safety cars should be noted – it effectively ruled out pro-am partnerships from outright glory, their slower bronzes unable to capitalise upon lengthy caution periods to use up their minimum six hours of drive time. But that should take nothing away from the superiority of the #43 and #48 machines.

Inter Europol first moved into the lead after the opening round of pitstops when the polesitting TDS team installed bronze Rodrigo Sales at the wheel. The #43 car remained in contention thereafter, although did have to make an extra stop when pitting under an early full-course yellow.

But the charging VDS Panis car soon became a threat as the impressive Masson and Gray helped close the gap to just 3.4s with 90 minutes to go. Yelloly continued to have the edge until a costly mistake at his penultimate pitstop. "I locked the rears going into the pitlane just trying to make a little bit more time," said Yelloly, who was handed a late drive-through for pitlane speeding. Suddenly, a 7s lead was looking irrelevant. "I did think our race was over and thought we were going to finish second," Yelloly added.

It was advantage VDS, but there was to be one final twist. Masson suddenly started posting slow times and was trying to limp his ORECA to the finish with suspension woes, believed to be front-right toe-link trouble.

A reprieved Yelloly blasted back past with minutes remaining and sealed the win. But such was the top two's advantage that Masson still finished second. "I had to push to put on pressure, they got a drive-through because of this – it was the plan," explained the Frenchman. But suspension strife was not part of the script.

Smiechowski was gracious in victory, the 2023 winner having narrowly lost out last year, believing that "we both deserved to win today".

The podium was completed by the 'Spike the Dragon' AO by TF entry, which was the leading pro-am contender to finally give perennial bridesmaid Louis Deletraz a Le Mans class win. Their progress was aided by both IDEC Sport cars shedding right-rear wheels, and a clever strategy helped propel the crew a lap clear of the next-best pro-am.

"We did our own thing," said Deletraz, who shared with Dane Cameron and bronze PJ Hyett. "We ran PJ at night, which a lot of the other teams tried to avoid to put the bronze at night because they're more prone to mistakes."

But there were no such nightmares for PJ, who was given the perfect Father's Day present of class success, albeit well adrift of the fun and games ahead.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Suspension woes cost #48 VDS Panis crew victory

McMASTER/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

POWERED BY motorsport STATS

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 4/8 RESULTS

LE MANS 24 HOURS, LE MANS (FRA) 15-16 JUNE (387 LAPS – 3276.653 MILES)

POS	NO	DRIVERS	TEAM/CAR	CLASS	TIME	GRID
1	83	Phil **Hanson** (GBR) Robert **Kubica** (POL) Yifei **Ye** (CHN)	AF Corse / Ferrari 499P	Hypercar	24h02m53.332s	13
2	6	Kevin **Estre** (FRA) Laurens **Vanthoor** (BEL) Matt **Campbell** (AUS)	Porsche Penske Motorsport / Porsche 963	Hypercar	+14.084s	21
3	51	James **Calado** (GBR) Alessandro **Pier Guidi** (ITA) Antonio **Giovinazzi** (ITA)	Ferrari AF Corse / Ferrari 499P	Hypercar	+28.487s	11
4	12	Will **Stevens** (GBR) Norman **Nato** (FRA) Alex **Lynn** (GBR)	Cadillac Hertz Team Jota / Cadillac V-Series.R	Hypercar	+2m18.639s	1
5	7	Mike **Conway** (GBR) Kamui **Kobayashi** (JPN) Nyck **de Vries** (NLD)	Toyota Gazoo Racing / Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	-1 lap/+15.652s	16
6	5	Julien **Andlauer** (FRA) Michael **Christensen** (DNK) Mathieu **Jaminet** (FRA)	Porsche Penske Motorsport / Porsche 963	Hypercar	-1 lap/+52.529s	3
7	38	Earl **Bamber** (NZL) Sebastien **Bourdais** (FRA) Jenson **Button** (GBR)	Cadillac Hertz Team Jota / Cadillac V-Series.R	Hypercar	-1 lap/+1m37.200s	2
8	4	Felipe **Nasr** (BRA) Nick **Tandy** (GBR) Pascal **Wehrlein** (DEU)	Porsche Penske Motorsport / Porsche 963	Hypercar	-1 lap/+2m35.625s	5
9	35	Ferdinand **Habsburg** (AUT) Paul-Loup **Chatin** (FRA) Charles **Milesi** (FRA)	Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech) / Alpine A424	Hypercar	-2 laps/+3m23.449s	12
10	36	Frederic **Makowiecki** (FRA) Mick **Schumacher** (DEU) Jules **Gounon** (FRA)	Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech) / Alpine A424	Hypercar	-3 laps/+44.494s	9
11	94	Loic **Duval** (FRA) Malthe **Jakobsen** (DNK) Stoffel **Vandoorne** (BEL)	Peugeot TotalEnergies / Peugeot 9X8	Hypercar	-3 laps/+1m25.539s	17
12	009	Marco **Sorensen** (DNK) Alex **Riberas** (ESP) Roman **De Angelis** (CAN)	Aston Martin THOR Team / Aston Martin Valkyrie	Hypercar	-4 laps/+57.747s	15
13	99	Neel **Jani** (CHE) Nico **Pino** (CHL) Nico **Varrone** (ARG)	Proton Competition / Porsche 963	Hypercar	-4 laps/+2m11.035s	19
14	007	Harry **Tincknell** (GBR) Tom **Gamble** (GBR) Ross **Gunn** (GBR)	Aston Martin THOR Team / Aston Martin Valkyrie	Hypercar	-6 laps/+3.001s	20
15	8	Sebastien **Buemi** (CHE) Brendon **Hartley** (NZL) Ryo **Hirakawa** (JPN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing / Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	-7 laps/+2m34.824s	10
16	93	Paul **di Resta** (GBR) Mikkel **Jensen** (DNK) Jean-Eric **Vergne** (FRA)	Peugeot TotalEnergies / Peugeot 9X8	Hypercar	-8 laps/+23.196s	18
17	20	Rene **Rast** (DEU) Robin **Frijns** (NLD) Sheldon **van der Linde** (ZAF)	BMW M Team WRT / BMW M Hybrid V8	Hypercar	-12 laps/+2.688s	6
18	43	Tom **Dillmann** (FRA) Jakub **Smiechowski** (POL) Nick **Yelloly** (GBR)	Inter Europol Competition / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-20 laps/+1m15.691s	23
19	48	Esteban **Masson** (FRA) Oliver **Gray** (GBR) Franck **Perera** (FRA)	VDS Panis Racing (TDS Racing) / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-20 laps/+3m11.444s	32
20	199	Louis **Deletraz** (CHE) PJ **Hyett** (USA) Dane **Cameron** (USA)	AO by TF / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-21 laps/+3m03.487s	24
21	9	Jonas **Ried** (DEU) Maceo **Capietto** (FRA) Reshad **de Gerus** (FRA)	Iron Lynx - Proton / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-22 laps/+10.227s	36
22	29	Mathias **Beche** (CHE) Rodrigo **Sales** (USA) Clement **Novalak** (FRA)	TDS Racing / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-22 laps/+2m51.137s	22
23	11	Bent **Viscaal** (NLD) Giorgio **Roda** (ITA) Rene **Binder** (AUT)	Proton Competition / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-22 laps/+3m16.465s	34
24	22	Renger **van der Zande** (NLD) Pietro **Fittipaldi** (BRA) David **Heinemeier Hansson** (DNK)	United Autosports / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-23 laps/+50.404s	26
25	25	Theo **Pourchaire** (FRA) Matthias **Kaiser** (LIE) Lorenzo **Fluxa** (ESP)	Algarve Pro Racing / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-23 laps/+1m13.113s	33
26	183	Matthieu **Vaxiviere** (FRA) Francois **Perrodo** (FRA) Antonio **Felix da Costa** (PRT)	AF Corse / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-23 laps/+1m48.608s	28
27	34	Luca **Ghiotto** (ITA) Nick **Boulle** (USA) Jean-Baptiste **Simmenauer** (FRA)	Inter Europol Competition / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-24 laps/+10.148s	37
28	23	Oliver **Jarvis** (GBR) Daniel **Schneider** (BRA) Ben **Hanley** (GBR)	United Autosports / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-24 laps/+3m10.891s	25
29	16	Patrick **Pilet** (FRA) Michael **Jensen** (DNK) Ryan **Cullen** (IRL)	RLR M Sport / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-25 laps/+1.436s	29
30	45	Nicky **Catsburg** (NLD) George **Kurtz** (USA) Alex **Quinn** (GBR)	Algarve Pro Racing / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-25 laps/+1m13.049s	31
31	15	Kevin **Magnussen** (DNK) Dries **Vanthoor** (BEL) Raffaele **Marciello** (ITA)	BMW M Team WRT / BMW M Hybrid V8	Hypercar	-26 laps/+1m28.923s	4
32	37	Tom **Blomqvist** (GBR) Alex **Malykhin** (BLR) Tristan **Vautier** (FRA)	CLX Pure Rxcing / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-29 laps/+3m18.454s	27
33	92	Ryan **Hardwick** (USA) Riccardo **Pera** (ITA) Richard **Lietz** (AUT)	Manthey 1st Phorm / Porsche 911 GT3-R	LMGT3	-46 laps/+29.593s	43
34	21	Francois **Heriau** (FRA) Simon **Mann** (USA) Alessio **Rovera** (ITA)	Vista AF Corse / Ferrari 296 GT3	LMGT3	-46 laps/+1m02.852s	40
35	81	Charlie **Eastwood** (GBR) Tom **Van Rompuy** (BEL) Rui **Andrade** (PRT)	TF Sport / Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R	LMGT3	-46 laps/+1m41.303s	44
36	27	Mattia **Drudi** (ITA) Ian **James** (GBR) Zacharie **Robichon** (CAN)	Heart of Racing (Prodrive) / Aston Martin Vantage GT3	LMGT3	-46 laps/+2m44.715s	39
37	87	Clemens **Schmid** (AUT) Razvan **Umbrarescu** (ROU) Jose Maria **Lopez** (ARG)	AKKODIS ASP Team / Lexus RC F GT3	LMGT3	-47 laps/+4.497s	52
38	90	Antares **Au** (HKG) Loek **Hartog** (NLD) Klaus **Bachler** (AUT)	Manthey / Porsche 911 GT3-R	LMGT3	-47 laps/+2m23.759s	57
39	33	Daniel **Juncadella** (ESP) Ben **Keating** (USA) Jonny **Edgar** (GBR)	TF Sport / Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R	LMGT3	-48 laps/+1m50.177s	60
40	57	Daniel **Serra** (BRA) Takeshi **Kimura** (JPN) Casper **Stevenson** (GBR)	Kessel Racing / Ferrari 296 GT3	LMGT3	-48 laps/+2m10.538s	53
41	77	Ben **Barker** (GBR) Bernardo **Sousa** (PRT) Ben **Tuck** (GBR)	Proton Competition / Ford Mustang GT3	LMGT3	-49 laps/+37.478s	51
42	13	Orey **Fidani** (CAN) Lars **Kern** (DEU) Matt **Bell** (GBR)	AWA Racing / Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R	LMGT3	-49 laps/+40.199s	58
43	150	Lilou **Wadoux** (FRA) Custodio **Toledo** (BRA) Riccardo **Agostini** (ITA)	Richard Mille AF Corse / Ferrari 296 GT3	LMGT3	-49 laps/+2m09.808s	59
44	61	Maxime **Martin** (BEL) Martin **Berry** (AUS) Lin **Hodenius** (NLD)	Iron Lynx / Mercedes-AMG GT3	LMGT3	-50 laps/+3m53.152s	42
45	10	Valentin **Hasse-Clot** (FRA) Derek **DeBoer** (USA) Eduardo **Barrichello** (BRA)	Racing Spirit of Leman (Prodrive) / Aston Vantage GT3	LMGT3	-51 laps/+12.533s	55
46	193	Chris **Froggatt** (GBR) Jonathan **Hui** (CHN) Eddie **Cheever** (ITA)	Ziggo Sport Tempesta / Ferrari 296 GT3	LMGT3	-52 laps/+1m27.452s	47
47	63	Luca **Stolz** (DEU) Stephen **Grove** (AUS) Brenton **Grove** (AUS)	Iron Lynx / Mercedes-AMG GT3	LMGT3	-53 laps/+18.937s	62
48	85	Celia **Martin** (FRA) Rahel **Frey** (CHE) Sarah **Bovy** (BEL)	Iron Dames (Iron Lynx) / Porsche 911 GT3-R	LMGT3	-53 laps/+1m03.693s	56
NC	59	James **Cottingham** (GBR) Gregoire **Saucy** (CHE) Sebastien **Baud** (FRA)	United Autosports / McLaren 720S GT3 Evo	LMGT3	314 laps-alternator	49
R	28	Job **van Uitert** (NLD) Paul **Lafargue** (FRA) Sebastian **Alvarez** (MEX)	IDEC Sport / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	308 laps-lost wheel	30
R	78	Jack **Hawksworth** (GBR) Arnold **Robin** (FRA) Finn **Gehrsitz** (DEU)	AKKODIS ASP Team / Lexus RC F GT3	LMGT3	268 laps-damage	46
R	311	Jack **Aitken** (GBR) Felipe **Drugovich** (BRA) Frederik **Vesti** (DNK)	Cadillac Whelen (Action Express) / Cadillac V-Series.R	Hypercar	247 laps-engine	8
R	18	Andre **Lotterer** (DEU) Jamie **Chadwick** (GBR) Mathys **Jaubert** (FRA)	IDEC Sport / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	206 laps-lost wheel	35
R	54	Davide **Rigon** (ITA) Thomas **Flohr** (CHE) Francesco **Castellacci** (ITA)	Vista AF Corse / Ferrari 296 GT3	LMGT3	192 laps-torque sensor	50
R	101	Ricky **Taylor** (USA) Jordan **Taylor** (USA) Filipe **Albuquerque** (PRT)	Cadillac WTR / Cadillac V-Series.R	Hypercar	189 laps-engine	14
R	24	Colin **Braun** (USA) Naveen **Rao** (USA) Cem **Bolukbasi** (TUR)	Nielsen Racing / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	170 laps-accident	38
R	31	Yasser **Shahin** (AUS) Timur **Boguslavskiy** (RUS) Augusto **Farfus** (BRA)	The Bend Team WRT / BMW M4 GT3	LMGT3	168 laps-rabbit strike	54
R	46	Kelvin **van der Linde** (ZAF) Ahmad **Al Harthy** (OMN) Valentino **Rossi** (ITA)	Team WRT / BMW M4 GT3	LMGT3	156 laps-electronics	41
R	95	Darren **Leung** (GBR) Sean **Gelael** (IDN) Marino **Sato** (JPN)	United Autosports / McLaren 720S GT3 Evo	LMGT3	80 laps-drivetrain	45
R	60	Lorcan **Hanafin** (GBR) Andrew **Gilbert** (GBR) Fran **Rueda** (ESP)	Iron Lynx / Mercedes-AMG GT3	LMGT3	57 laps-alternator	61
R	88	Dennis **Olsen** (NOR) Stefano **Gattuso** (ITA) Giammarco **Levorato** (ITA)	Proton Competition / Ford Mustang GT3	LMGT3	46 laps-accident	48
EX	50	Nicklas **Nielsen** (DNK) Antonio **Fuoco** (ITA) Miguel **Molina** (ESP)	Ferrari AF Corse / Ferrari 499P	Hypercar	+29.666s	7

First-named drivers started race. **Winners' av speed** 136.253mph. **Fastest lap** **Bourdais** 3m26.063s, 147.918mph. **LMP2** **Beche** 3m36.267s, 140.939mph. **LMGT3** **Drudi** 3m55.456s, 129.453mph.

LAPS LED (OVERALL)

#83	**Ferrari**	140
#51	**Ferrari**	95
#6	**Porsche**	65
#50	**Ferrari**	42
#5	**Porsche**	36
#8	**Toyota**	6
#94	**Peugeot**	2
#4	**Porsche**	1

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

HYPERCAR

1	**Pier Guidi/Giovinazzi/Calado**	105
2	**Hanson/Kubica/Ye**	89
3	**Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen**	57
4	**Kobayashi/Conway/de Vries**	44
5	**Estre/L Vanthoor**	42
6	**Lynn/Nato/Stevens**	42

LMGT3

1	**Pera/Lietz/Hardwick**	81
2	**Rovera/Heriau/Mann**	76
3	**Keating/Juncadella/Edgar**	60
4	**James/Drudi/Robichon**	47
5	**Robin/Gehrsitz**	38
6	**Eastwood/Andrade/Van Rompuy**	38

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

HYPERCAR

1	**Ferrari**	172	5	**BMW**	64
2	**Toyota**	95	6	**Alpine**	54
3	**Porsche**	84	7	**Peugeot**	14
4	**Cadillac**	76	8	**Aston Martin**	2

F1 GTR
95
1995
LDS

WEC

McLAREN CONFIRMS UNITED AUTOSPORTS ALLIANCE FOR 2027 HYPERCAR ATTACK

McLaren will partner with United Autosports when it joins the Hypercar ranks in the World Endurance Championship in 2027. Confirmation of the deal with the British team was one of a number of details of the McLaren LMDh programme announced on the eve of the Le Mans 24 Hours.

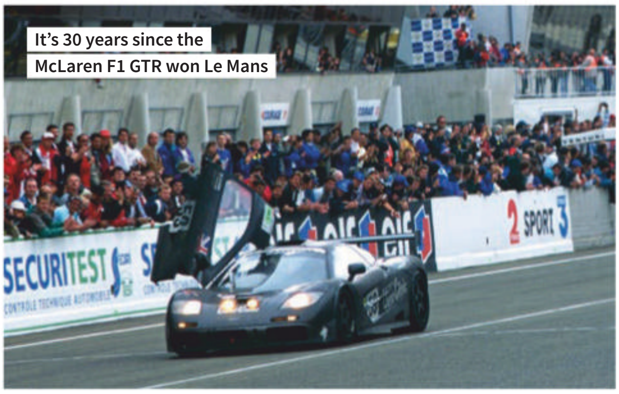
A pair of new LMDhs will be run under the McLaren United banner, while the car will be developed on the Dallara chassis spine. The prototype, powered by a twin-turbo V6, is scheduled to hit the track at the end of the first quarter of next year ahead of proper testing beginning at the start of the second quarter.

United is expanding into the Hypercar ranks after establishing itself as one of the top teams in LMP2: it has two Le Mans class victories, a WEC crown and titles in each of the European and Asian Le Mans Series to its name since it moved into the junior prototype category in 2017.

"United's track record speaks for itself," said McLaren Racing CEO Zak Brown, who co-owns United with long-time friend Richard Dean. Brown stressed McLaren "did take a look at a couple of other teams", but pointed out that his involvement in the team will be of benefit. "It gives me comfort in terms of the working relationship and having the ability to make decisions in the best interests of McLaren easily," he said.

United has made no secret of its Hypercar aspirations and was in talks with Porsche about running its WEC operation when it examined the LMDh formula. Dean explained that the team has been preparing for the graduation to Hypercar for some time.

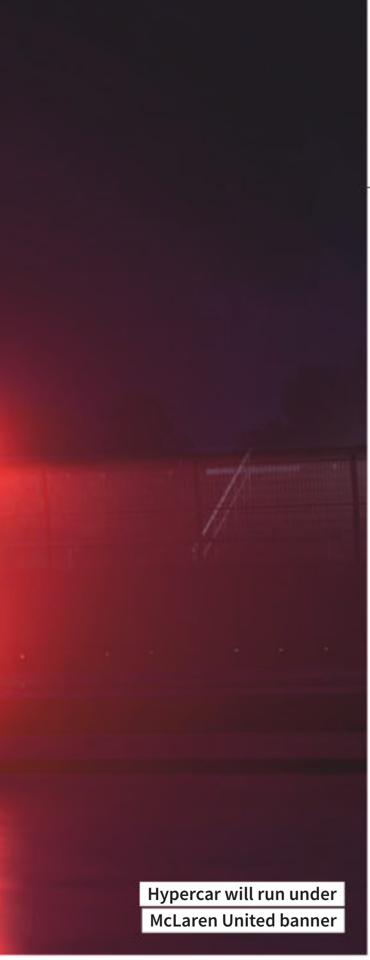
"It wasn't so much as throwing our hat in the ring as presenting ourselves in term of results and structure to show we can do it," said Dean, whose team already runs McLaren's 720S GT3 Evo in the WEC. "If success means we are ready, we are obviously ready – in the


It's 30 years since the McLaren F1 GTR won Le Mans

SUTTON IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

United claimed its second Le Mans LMP2 victory in 2024

DAVID LORD PHOTOGRAPHY/LAT/GETTY IMAGES


Hypercar will run under McLaren United banner

McLAREN

Dallara chassis choice cemented by IndyCar links

ROBERTSON/GETTY IMAGES

past 12 months we've won both Le Mans and the Daytona 24 Hours in our category, but we know it's not just about results.

"We put up a 62,000sq ft facility in 2019 and in 2022 we recruited Jakob Andreasen from Toyota as technical director. The idea was that if anyone did a detailed investigation of the team, they would see that these guys are Hypercar-ready."

McLaren will expand upon its partnership with Dallara Automobili from the IndyCar Series. Brown said the Italian organisation "ticked a few more boxes" than the other potential constructors, ORECA, Ligier and Multimatic Motorsports. The decision to go with a turbocharged V6 was "performance driven" rather than a marketing one – the latest road car road engine is a turbo V6. The internal combustion element of the hybrid powertrain will be developed in conjunction with an external supplier that has yet to be named.

No drivers have been announced for the United McLarens, but Dean revealed that discussions were already under way given that the car will be up and running early next year. United will continue in P2, he explained, which could mean a dual programme in the ELMS and the IMSA SportsCar Championship.

An expansion of McLaren's LMDh campaign into IMSA in 2028 was not ruled out by Brown. "We have interest in IMSA, but one step at a time," he said. "It's a great championship and the questions are, do we run two cars, one car, just do Daytona? That's under review."

McLaren took the opportunity of the 30th anniversary of its victory at Le Mans with the F1 GTR in 1995 to flesh out details of its return to the pinnacle of sportscar racing for the first time since the end of that programme. Confirmation of its entry in April came via a perfunctory statement on social media.

Brown explained that the stars had aligned to make an ambition to join the Hypercar field possible. McLaren was a participant in the rule-making process that led to the Le Mans Hypercar rulebook before nailing its colours to the LMDh mast quickly after the announcement of the second route into Hypercar in 2020.

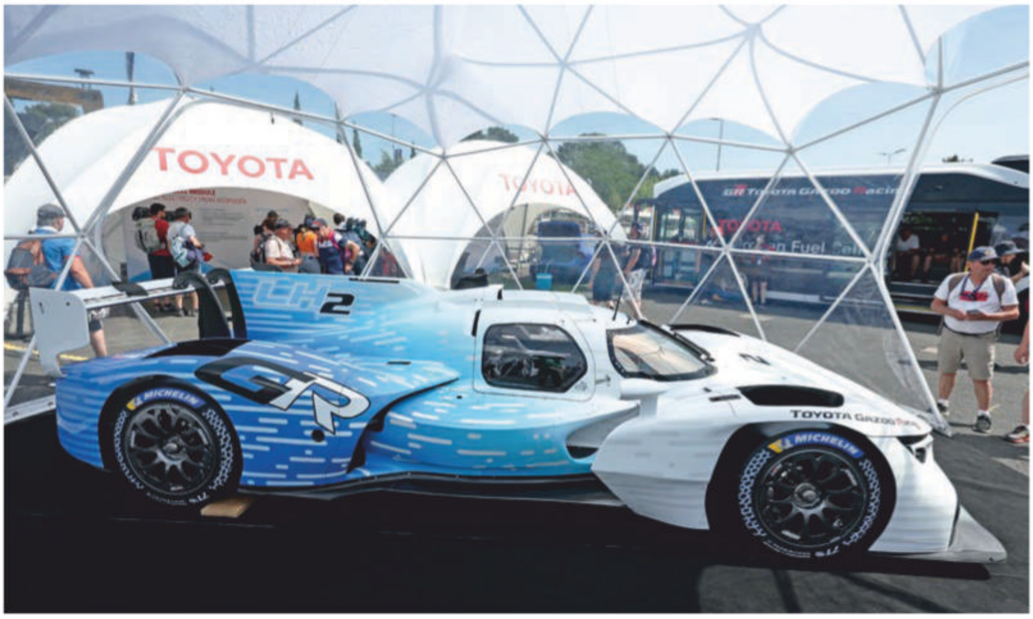
United co-owners Brown and Dean are long-time friends

ROBERTSON/GETTY IMAGES

"The desire has always been there and now the timing lined up with the desire for a variety of reasons," he said. "We wanted to see the formula, the associated budgets and who was going to come and play. Sportscar racing now is as popular as it has ever been. There was the competition, the budget, affordability, how much sponsorship could be raised etc. Second was making sure our Formula 1 and IndyCar teams were in healthy places – we didn't want to provide any distractions. Obviously F1 is in a great place, our business is in a great place, our IndyCar team is in a strong place and getting stronger."

The third factor, Brown explained, was the buyout of McLaren Automotive by CYVN Holdings, which is owned by the Abu Dhabi government. He stressed that the programme is being run by McLaren Racing, but will be undertaken "in association" with the car-making arm. That association will be focused on a trackday version of the LMDh built by Racing but sold through the Automotive dealer network.

GARY WATKINS



HYDROGEN TOYOTA UNVEILED

Toyota has taken the wraps off a hydrogen-fuelled prototype development car as the next step on the road to its projected Le Mans 24 Hours entry with the alternative fuel. The GR H2 is designed to advance its understanding and knowledge of running an internal combustion engine fuelled by liquid hydrogen. It has been built around a GR010 HYBRID Le Mans Hypercar chassis, while the hybrid powertrain of so-far-undisclosed configuration has been developed at Toyota's Higashi-Fuji Technical Center in Japan. No timeline has been set for the GR H2's first test.

EBREY/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

WEC

HYPERCARS TO RACE ON UNTIL END OF 2032 SEASON

Le Mans Hypercars and LMDh machinery will continue racing in the World Endurance Championship until the end of 2032. The predicted second extension of the lifecycle of the twin rulesets in force in the WEC was confirmed at the traditional pre-Le Mans 24 Hours press conference.

The latest announcement from the Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA follows one last year prolonging the Hypercar category for two years until the end of 2029. The further extension means the LMH rules should end up stretching for 12 years and LMDh for 10.

"It is important to give the manufacturers and the audience a signal of stability," said ACO president Pierre Fillon. "We are guided by two principles: stability and cost control. Giving the manufacturers a chance to get a return on their investment was the target for us."

It has yet to be defined whether there will be a push to remove any of the differences between LMH and LMDh machinery.

IMSA has yet to reveal whether it will follow the move, but it did announce that it has extended what it calls a "strategic partnership" until 2032.

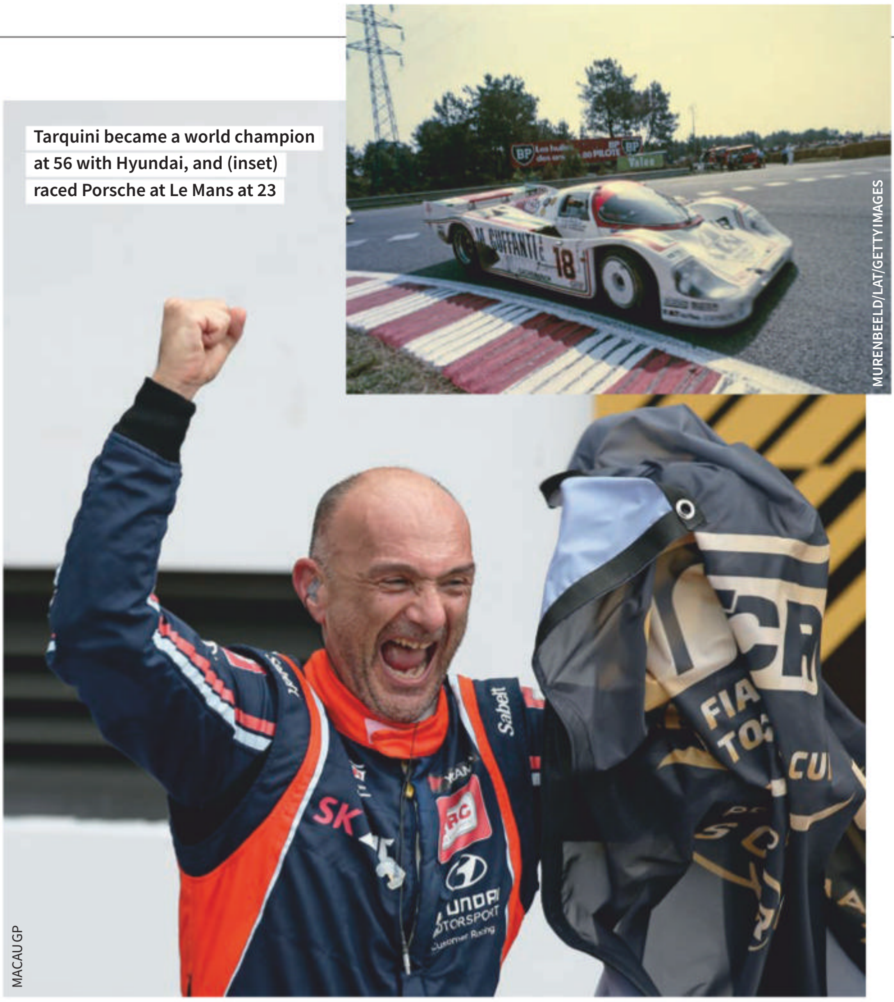
Also revealed at the ACO's Friday press conference in Le Mans was an opening up of the Asian Le Mans Series to Hypercar class machinery. A pro-am class for LMH and LMDhs will be added to the series for the 2026-27 running.

Stephane Ratel, who jointly runs the ALMS with the ACO, explained that the move had resulted from requests from manufacturers, teams and drivers. "We believe there is the possibility to attract some Asian teams and drivers; for sure there are teams whose clients are interested," he said.

French constructors ORECA and Ligier will build the next generation of LMP2 chassis due in 2028. They were successful in the FIA tender process that opened this year for the two licences – rather than the current four – to produce the P2 machinery that will race in the European and Asian Le Mans Series as well as IMSA.

Gibson Technology, builder of the one-make normally aspirated V8 found in the existing generation of P2s, will continue as the sole engine supplier. The new engine will be a 560bhp twin-turbo V6.

GARY WATKINS



Tarquini became a world champion at 56 with Hyundai, and (inset) raced Porsche at Le Mans at 23

MURENBEELD/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

MACAU GP

WEC

TARQUINI TO HEAD UP GENESIS PROJECT

Touring car legend Gabriele Tarquini is the new sporting director of the Genesis Hypercar team that will enter the World Endurance Championship next year. The winner of World, British and European tin-top titles was one of two high-profile appointments announced by South Korean manufacturer Hyundai's prestige brand ahead of the Le Mans 24 Hours.

Tarquini, who also made 38 Formula 1 starts, has taken the new role at Paul Ricard-based Genesis Magma Racing after a stint as team manager at the BRC Squadra Corse TCR operation. Tarquini moved into management following his retirement from the cockpit aged 59 in 2021 after four seasons racing for the Italian squad in the TCR World Touring Car Cup.

"When I stopped racing in 2021, the natural evolution was to work in motorsport, starting in the world I know – touring cars," said Tarquini, who made a single start at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1985 driving a Brun Porsche 956. "I've had some very successful seasons, but joining Genesis Magma Racing is a new challenge for me. I have a lot to learn about WEC, but I will use all my experience as a driver, a coach and a team manager to be prepared for next season."

Justin Taylor, engineer on the 2023 Le Mans-winning Ferrari 499P Le Mans Hypercar and a veteran of Audi's LMP1 campaigns, has been confirmed as chief engineer after joining the Genesis set-up last month. Anouck Abadie, a former racer in the French Formula 4 series, takes the team manager role after departing the Swiss Kessel Racing GT team at which she had held the same job since 2022.

Team principal Cyril Abiteboul said: "Anouck, Justin and Gabriele are fantastic additions to the Genesis Magma Racing team. They all have great experience in motorsport, which will be complemented by additional endurance racing expertise of the other team members we will recruit in the coming months."

The Genesis LMDh, to be known as the GMR-001 Hypercar, remains on schedule to run for the first time in August.

GARY WATKINS

V8 RUMBLE ON THE CARDS FOR FORD LE MANS RACER

Ford's new LMDh contender is not going to look like a Mustang when it arrives in the World Endurance Championship in 2028, but it will probably sound like one. Heavy hints were dropped that its forthcoming prototype will be powered by a naturally aspirated V8 when the manufacturer released further details about its return to the sportscar racing big time.

The partnership with French constructor ORECA in the development of the chassis was finally confirmed, though it chose not to unveil details of the configuration of the engine it is developing in-house. But both Jim Farley and Mark Rushbrook, respectively CEO and motorsport boss, made comments suggesting that Ford is going to buck the trend and opt against a turbocharged engine.

Asked whether its LMDh will be styled after the Mustang, global director of Ford Performance Rushbrook (below) said: "What I am saying internally and externally is that the aerodynamicists will design the car. It's a race car and we race to win. But it might sound like a Mustang."

"I don't care if the car looks like a spaceship," added Farley. "Race cars have a beauty in their own form." On the subject of the engine, he said: "I am not going to say what the powertrain is going to be, but we are an American company."

Rushbrook described the decision to not expand its long-term relationship with Multimatic Motorsport in favour of partnering with ORECA "as an independent decision for a specific programme".

Dan Sayers, who oversaw development of the second-generation Aston Martin Vantage GTE and GT3 contenders as technical director at Prodrive's Aston Martin Racing entity, has been named as programme director. The Briton joins from Red Bull Ford Powertrains, which he joined after stints at Red Bull's technology arm and the Formula 1 team.

GARY WATKINS

ROBERTSON/GETTY IMAGES

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WEC

FERRARI SEXTET SET TO GO INTO FOURTH YEAR TOGETHER

Ferrari has outlined an intent to go into its 2026 World Endurance Championship campaign with an unchanged roster of drivers in the two factory 499P Le Mans Hypercars. Should it turn out that way, next year will be the fourth consecutive season with the same six drivers.

Antonello Coletta, the Italian manufacturer's sportscar racing boss, has again stressed the importance of stability in the AF Corse-run works team's line-up.

"There is no intention to change anybody, so I hope that we can keep the same team for the next seasons," Coletta stated during Le Mans 24 Hours week. "For us stability of drivers is something that is truly fundamental – it's one of the pillars on which we carry out our sporting activity. That doesn't mean that we will never change but, for now, we're extremely happy with the drivers we have."

But Coletta stressed that it was too early to confirm that the line-ups of Antonio Fuoco, Nicklas Nielsen and Miguel Molina in #50 and James Calado, Alessandro Pier Guidi and Antonio Giovinazzi in #51 will remain unchanged. Negotiations with those drivers who will be out of contract at the end of this year, were only due to start after Le Mans, he said.

GARY WATKINS

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

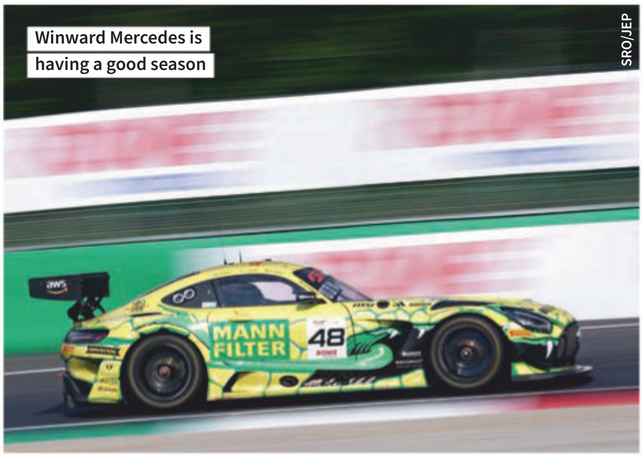
MERCEDES TRIO PLAY CARDS RIGHT TO BEAT LOAKE McLAREN

With a whopping eight safety car or full course yellow periods, the second GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup round at Monza was full of jeopardy. As last year, with the fast track affecting fuel consumption, a third mandatory pitstop was introduced and that allowed teams to play a little more with the strategy, the third obligatory stop necessitating fuel and an optional maximum of two tyres.

On track, the Mercedes-AMG was the car to have, the GetSpeed entry of Luca Stolz, Fabian Schiller and Jules Gounon taking pole position. It led early on but, when Stolz blasted out of the pitlane for his double stint, he did so with the left-front wheel loose. He limped around until it became too dangerous and parked it trackside. That allowed the Winward car of Maro Engel, Lucas Auer and Matteo Cairoli into the lead for the first Monza Merc win, while Joseph Loake, Benji Goethe and Marvin Kirchhofer took second in their Garage 59 McLaren 720S after an impressive run in the green periods.

Marco Sorensen, Nicki Thiim and Mattia Drudi (Comtoyou Aston Martin) were third, ahead of Gold Cup winners Ben Tuck, Jens Klingmann and Al Faisal Al Zubair (BMW M4). Silver honours fell to the Century Motorsport BMW of Jarrod Waberski, Will Moore and Mex Jansen.

DAVID ADDISON



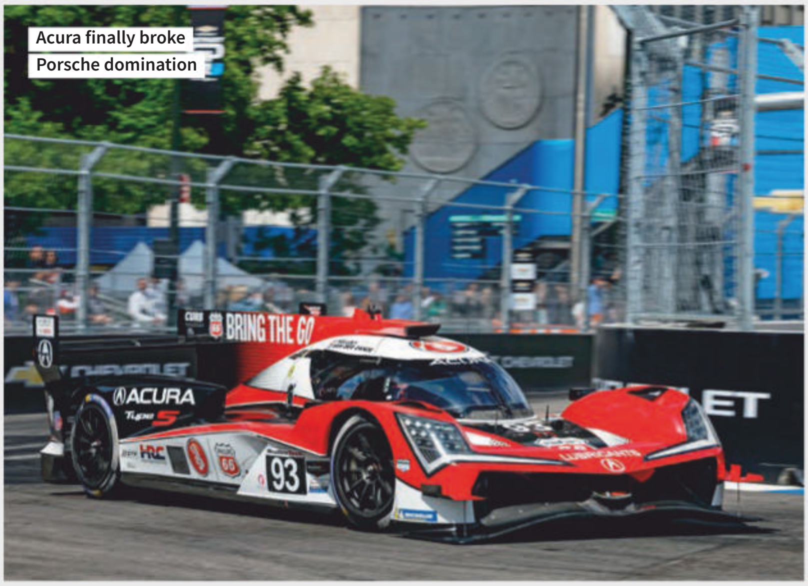
Winward Mercedes is having a good season

SRO/JEP

ADAC MOTORSPORT

RAST ASSURED IN BMW

Rene Rast (BMW) and Jack Aitken (Ferrari) lead the DTM field to a rolling start at Zandvoort. Three-time champion Rast went on to give the M4 GT3 Evo its first win of the season, with Marco Wittmann completing a marque 1-2. Aitken was fourth behind the Porsche of Thomas Preining. The previous day's race took place on a drying track, Turkish Porsche ace Ayhancan Guven timing his switch to slicks perfectly for victory.



Acura finally broke Porsche domination

FARMER/LUMEN/GETTY IMAGES

IMSA

NEW BoP AND NEW WINNERS IN DETROIT

Love it or hate it, IMSA's Balance of Performance procedure achieved precisely what it was designed to do in advance of the most recent race on the bumpy streets of downtown Detroit.

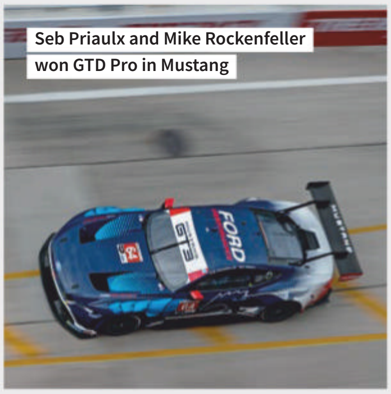
In race trim, all but two of the 11 GTP entries produced laps comfortably within a second of the fastest time turned by championship leader Nick Tandy's Porsche Penske Motorsport 963. The only outliers – and not by much – were the Heart of Racing Team Aston Martin Valkyrie, which is still in its infancy in terms of development (and finished a respectable eighth) and the privateer JDC Miller MotorSports Porsche, which experienced a difficult weekend.

The rulemakers performed their usual diligence following the previous race at Laguna Seca (and the Long Beach street course race prior to that) before concluding that after winning each of the four races thus far – all on totally different tracks – the Porsches should carry a little more weight (11kg). BMW's Hybrid V8, which had taken four consecutive poles in the hands of Dries Vanthoor, also carried a tad more ballast (2kg), as well as experiencing a modest power reduction (1.4%). By contrast, the Acura ARX-06s, which had struggled in each of the previous rounds, were allowed to lose 22kg. The Cadillacs, on home turf, weighed in a healthy 29kg lighter while their V8s could be tuned up a little (by 2.8% to a maximum of 505 kW, compared to the Porsches' 480 kW).

The result was a wide-open contest, which provided some tremendous racing. England's Nick Yelloly found the handling of his Meyer Shank Acura transformed as a result of the tweaks, and duly snagged his first ever pole position, which was later translated into a spectacular victory by co-driver Renger van der Zande. But the Dutchman's triumph owed more to some audacious overtakes than anything else.

Felipe Nasr looked set fair after a stellar opening stint from Tandy and a typically excellent pitstop, only to be overtaken opportunistically by Ricky Taylor's Cadillac. Van der Zande also nipped past the Porsche before mugging Taylor sublimely with only five minutes remaining. Job done.

JEREMY SHAW



Seb Priaulx and Mike Rockenfeller won GTD Pro in Mustang

GALSTAD/LUMEN/GETTY IMAGES

RACE WINNERS 31 May - 15 June

IMSA SPORTSCAR

Detroit 31 May

1 **Renger van der Zande/Nick Yelloly**
(Meyer Shank Racing Acura ARX-06)
2 **Ricky Taylor/Filipe Albuquerque**
(Wayne Taylor Cadillac V-Series.R)
3 **Mathieu Jaminet/Matt Campbell**
(Porsche Penske M'sport Porsche 963)

POINTS 1 **Nick Tandy/Felipe Nasr** 1795; 2 Jaminet/Campbell 1725; 3 Dries Vanthoor/Philipp Eng 1498.

GTWC EUROPE ENDURANCE CUP

Monza 1 June

Lucas Auer/Matteo Cairoli/Maro Engel
(Winward Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo)

POINTS 1 **Kelvin van der Linde/Charles Weerts/Ugo de Wilde** 43; 2 Auer/Cairoli/Engel 41; 3 Nicki Thiim/Mattia Drudi/Marco Sorensen 27.

DTM

Zandvoort 7-8 June

Race 1 **Ayhancan Guven**
(Manthey Porsche)
Race 2 **Rene Rast**
(Schubert M'sport BMW)

POINTS 1 **Lucas Auer** 91; 2 Rast 75; 3 Guven 73.

WOMEN DRIVEN BY DREAMS

JEP

GATTING BOWLED OUT

Iron Dames driver Michelle Gatting was unable to participate in the Le Mans 24 Hours after a bizarre Test Day incident. Amid a congested pitlane, the team's Porsche 911 GT3-R was inadvertently dropped on her foot, breaking bones in three places. "I've done hundreds, if not thousands, of driver changes – it was pure bad luck, nobody to blame," said Gatting (above), who was replaced by Sarah Bovy.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

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INSIDER

This year's Le Mans should have been better, argues Gary Watkins

Journalists are a whiny lot. I'm forever telling my friends that. We like a good moan. My colleagues and I complain about the Balance of Performance, harking back to the days when there were technical regulations, manufacturers built racing cars, and off they went to the race track. And then we complain about the BoP when it doesn't do its job.

Can we have it both ways? Of course we can! There's no point having BoP in the World Endurance Championship's Hypercar class, as well as in GTP in the IMSA SportsCar Championship across the Pond, if it doesn't do what it says on the tin – balance the performance of the cars. That wasn't the case at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

We had one manufacturer in Ferrari that was clearly in the ascendent. Forget about the 14 seconds it had in hand over Porsche at the finish, a margin of victory smaller by tenths than last year. The simple truth is that the Italian manufacturer was dominant. But for a few errors on its part, we would have been talking after the race about a Ferrari 1-2-3, at least until the disqualification of the #50 car that came home fourth.

The smart money was always on Ferrari to make it three in a row at Le Mans: it was favourite no matter how hard it tried to shrug off that tag. But no one was expecting it to have things all its own way. The events in the WEC last time out at Spa in May suggested it was going to have a fight on its hands.

The rulemakers – the Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA – have promised what they call "100% convergence" of the performance of the cars under the BoP. After that the race should come down to execution on the part of the teams and drivers. The second-placed Porsche had a race as near-perfect as you are going to get, yet couldn't beat a car that had been delayed by two penalties and an off.

It's also worth talking about the average pace of the drivers in the winning AF Corse Ferrari 499P Le Mans Hypercar with Robert Kubica, Yifei Ye and Phil Hanson at the wheel, and the Penske Porsche 963 LMDh shared by Kevin Estre, Laurens Vanthoor and Matt Campbell. The Porsche trio were separated by a little under three tenths on a 50-lap average, half a second if you widen the sample to 75 laps. Kubica was well clear of his team-mates: the span was 1.4s over 50 laps and a shade more over 75. So who wrung the maximum out of their machine over the 387 laps of the 93rd running of the Le Mans 24 Hours? Porsche Penske Motorsport, and not AF Corse.

If you work on the principles laid down by the ACO and the FIA, then the Porsche should have won – because it had the cleanest race. If you need any further evidence that the rulemakers got it wrong at Le Mans, you only have to look to Alpine, BMW and Peugeot. All three were genuine podium contenders at Spa – Ferrari was convinced Alpine could have won in Belgium – yet they weren't remotely in the game at Le Mans.

I understand that setting the BoP for Le Mans is a more difficult job than for Spa, Imola or anywhere else. It is based more on simulation than the race data used for the regular WEC races courtesy of the unique characteristics of the 8.47-mile Circuit de la Sarthe. It stands distinct from other venues on the WEC trail thanks to the three long blasts of the Mulsanne Straight and the one from its end to the Indianapolis sequence. But the organisers have a tool in power gain, which modifies the maximum power figures of the car above 250km/h (155mph), to balance the cars' top speeds. The sad truth is that it didn't do its job.

There was a chance to change the BoP. In the guidelines as written, a revision was permitted after the Le Mans Test Day the Sunday ahead of race week. It arguably was not clear by then that the majority of the manufacturers were going to be bit players, but it was increasingly so after practice. Even then a change could have come.

> ***"If you need further evidence that the rulemakers got it wrong, look to Alpine, BMW and Peugeot"***

Force majeure could have been claimed, just as it was in 2023. Back then the BoP system and the agreements with the participants that covered it were very different to today, but the chance for a change had passed when the ACO and the FIA unilaterally presented a new BoP days before the cars were due on track at the Test Day. This time around they chose not to act in the face of all the evidence.

And so we ended up with what for me was a damp squib of a Le Mans 24 Hours. We're meant to be in a golden age of sportscar racing, but where was the glow at the most important race of the season? The shine was taken off by a BoP that wasn't on the money.

Keep rolling, rolling, rolling

Takamoto Katsuta and Aaron Johnston were among six Rally1 crews caught out by the Telti-Calangianus-Berchidda stage on Rally Italy Sardinia. Their Toyota GR Yaris clipped a hidden rock that pitched the car into a slow roll. Spectators helped put the car back on its wheels and the duo went on to finish fifth. Jourdan Serderidis was also surprised by the same corner, producing an almost carbon copy roll. Reigning world champion Thierry Neuville ripped the left-rear corner off his Hyundai i20 N in a high-speed, narrow section of the pass while leading the rally.

Photographer McKlein

Where Sardinia, Italy
When Friday 6 June 2025

Details Canon EOS R3
EF16-35mm lens, 1/1600th @ F5

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
RALLY DEBRIEF

His victory makes Ogier this event's most successful driver

BANKS / McKLEIN

ROUND 6/14 RALLY ITALY SARDINIA RESULTS

1	**Sebastien Ogier/ Vincent Landais**	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	(Toyota Gazoo Racing)	**3h34m24.5s**
2	**Ott Tanak/ Martin Jarveoja**	Hyundai i20 N Rally1	(Hyundai Motorsport)	**+7.9s**
3	**Kalle Rovanpera/ Jonne Halttunen**	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	(Toyota Gazoo Racing)	**+50.5s**

POINTS 1 **Elfyn Evans** 133; 2 Ogier 114; 3 Rovanpera 113.

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

OGIER IS THE MASTER AS TOYOTA RUN CONTINUES

Sebastien Ogier claimed a third victory of the 2025 World Rally Championship season after surviving a final-stage mistake to become the most successful driver in Rally Italy Sardinia history.

Ogier and co-driver Vincent Landais avoided the pitfalls of Sardinia's 16 rough gravel stages to take an impressive 7.9-second win over Hyundai's Ott Tanak, while Toyota extended its 100% winning start to the campaign and Ogier moved clear of Sebastien Loeb with his fifth victory on the event.

Kalle Rovanpera completed the podium in his Toyota ahead of team-mate and championship leader Elfyn Evans, whose points lead decreased from 30 to 19, with 'part-timer' Ogier now second.

Toyota anticipated a particularly difficult challenge to claim victory in Sardinia, with Evans, Rovanpera and Ogier heading the road order in a rally where the road cleaning effect is significant. The Japanese marque opted not to test before the event, unlike rival Hyundai, which had been defeated only twice on the Italian island since 2016.

Ogier defied his road position to lead after the first stage, only to lose the advantage to Hyundai's reigning world champion Thierry Neuville on the next test. But it was Adrien Fourmaux who took a 2.9s lead over his team-mate at midday service. The lead then changed hands after each of Friday afternoon's stages, while Neuville became the first of the title contenders to hit trouble.

The Belgian slightly misjudged a super-fast and narrow section in the new Telti-Calangianus-Berchidda stage that caught out six Rally1 crews. The impact ripped the left-rear wheel from his car, prompting an early retirement. Ogier inherited a 2.1s lead from Fourmaux after stage six, with Tanak lurking in third, 7.3s adrift after nursing a broken damper.

Saturday was dominated by another intense Ogier versus Tanak scrap, following a dramatic start for Fourmaux that resulted in Ogier briefly losing the lead. Fourmaux picked up a puncture in the day's second stage and initially decided to continue before stopping to change the wheel, which cost the Hyundai driver almost four minutes. Fourmaux rejoined the stage, but his dust severely hampered Ogier's visibility for a portion of the test, resulting in a time loss of 29s and costing him the rally lead.

Toyota appealed to the organisers, who provided Ogier with a notional time that put him back ahead. Tanak's charge was dealt a blow by a puncture in stage nine, although the loss was limited to 10.5s. Tanak won two of the three Saturday afternoon stages to trail Ogier by 11.1s and set up a grandstand finish on Sunday. Ogier, however, couldn't be stopped, despite a brush with some bushes in the Power Stage.

Rovanpera was the only other Rally1 driver not to suffer a significant issue. He delivered a smart drive in a rally he doesn't like to score the maximum 10 Super Sunday points, underlined by a stunning Power Stage win by 8.1s from Neuville. He is now 20 points off the top of the table.

Evans faced the worst of the conditions on Friday opening the road, losing more than a minute, but was able to recover from a puncture to claim fourth.

Takamoto Katsuta also bounced back from a puncture and slow-speed roll to finish fifth. Toyota stablemate Sami Pajari ran as high as third before a puncture on Saturday and then a spin after contact with a tree on Sunday dropped him to seventh behind Oliver Solberg, the top Rally2 runner (albeit not registered for WRC2 points).

M-Sport Ford endured a disastrous rally, losing its three works cars for Martins Sesks (roll), Josh McErlean and Gregoire Munster (both suspension damage) in a matter of minutes on Friday morning.

TOM HOWARD

BANKS / McKLEIN

Runners-up Tanak and co-driver Martin Jarveoja

INSIDER

Malcolm Wilson at the FIA should be a boost for the WRC, says Tom Howard

When it comes to passion for rallying, there are few who can hold a candle to Malcolm Wilson, who hopes to put the discipline at the front of minds at the FIA as the governing body's new deputy for sport.

As a former driver and current team owner, Wilson has seen it all when it comes to the World Rally Championship, and his enthusiasm for it shows no signs of waning. I'm walking with the M-Sport WRC team founder through the Rally Italy Sardinia service park to find a quiet place to conduct an interview when a Lancia Stratos, which has been on static display, fires up and rumbles past M-Sport's tents. Its sound on idle is enough to stop Wilson in his tracks; he describes the noise as music.

This passion for rallying is perhaps why there are plenty in the service park who are behind Wilson taking up this new role as Mohammed Ben Sulayem's second in command to replace 2001 WRC co-driver champion Robert Reid, who stepped down earlier this year. Wilson is one of those people in the motorsport industry who makes things happen. The M-Sport team that he formed is a prime example. It operated factory programmes for Ford in the WRC from 1997 to 2012 and, even when it lost its full works status, it remained ever-present in the championship and famously won the drivers' title with Sebastien Ogier in 2017 and 2018, and the manufacturers' crown in the first of those two seasons. This year it has reunited with Ford to run the Blue Oval's Dakar Rally programme.

Wilson often trots out the line "rallying has been my life" and it's true – and it appears that it will continue to be for the foreseeable future. "I don't think you'll find anyone with the level of experience that Malcolm clearly has as a driver and team owner and in the commercial and business side of it," says former M-Sport driver and current WRC points leader Elfyn Evans. "He has got a wealth of experience and if it goes ahead then I wish him all the best."

Now Wilson is set to embark upon a new chapter at the FIA. His appointment arrives at a very important time for rallying's top tier as it gears up for what is seen as a critical and highly anticipated set of technical regulations for 2027. And at a time when the championship's promoter is in the process of being sold. The future of the WRC is a hot topic as the championship attempts to re-engage with manufacturers and attract a new audience.

It's encouraging that it appears Wilson's immediate priority will be a focus upon helping the WRC achieve its potential. Autosport understands that he will play a role in helping push through a potential sale of the promoter.

"Believe me, I know what I want to achieve," says Wilson. "All I've been doing for the last month is working on that [programme]. All I want to concentrate on to start with is rally. We need positivity in this sport and we have to grow it again.

"The most positive thing at the moment is the interest and the funds interested in investing a substantial amount of money into the WRC. I know there are people that want to get involved in this sport and take it to where it should be. It tells you what this sport still has to offer."

Another aspect that is likely to be high on the agenda is the finalisation of the 2027 regulations. The FIA confirmed refinements to the bodywork rules early in June that will allow manufacturers and tuners to run various body shapes on top of the spaceframe chassis. The WRC27 cars will be built to a cost cap of €345,000 and that is one area that has Wilson's full support.

"The basics of the regulations are there but we need to have variety [in models and power trains]," he adds. "I agree with the basic technical regulations and I agree with the cost cap.

"If you look back to 1980 you could buy a Ford Escort at the very most for £20,000 that could go and win a world rally. If you look at cumulative interest since 1980, that car today with cumulative interest of 418% would be £126,000. If you look at a current Rally1 car to go and win a rally, let's say a million euros, it's 3360% cumulative inflation, so we have done something wrong. If you look at a road car, the Mini at that time was £4000 and the cheapest one you can buy now is something like £26,000. The road car has stayed in line with inflation, the car that is capable of winning a rally has skyrocketed.

> ***"In the world championship I want to see 30 cars capable of winning and I want to see variety"***

"In the world championship I want to see 30 cars that are capable of winning and I want to see variety."

It's fair to say that Wilson will have plenty on his plate as he starts his new life at the FIA but, if he is able to channel his enthusiasm for the WRC into results, then rallying should be on the trajectory to a brighter future.

LIFELIVE

NEUVILLE'S *OTHER* MOTORSPORT LIFE

The reigning World Rally champion has his own team that has grown impressively in less than a decade – not that he's ready to give up driving just yet

TOM HOWARD

Thierry Neuville will forever be defined as a World Rally champion and a member of rallying's elite but, when it comes to motorsport, he is much more than just a driver. In tandem with his own career, 2024 title winner Neuville is also a successful team owner and a force in developing rallying at a grassroots level.

In 2016, the Belgian founded the LifeLive Motorsport team, located in the small city of Saint Vith on the Belgian/German border. Over the past decade it has expanded to become a rally and circuit racing squad in its own right.

Initially, Neuville's decision to start a motorsport team was born to help his younger brother Yannick compete in rallying, but it's since exploded into a far-reaching operation with a focus on helping aspiring drivers into the discipline. "It's grown from a hobby to a company," explains Neuville. "Together with my brother and partner we have been running the company mainly from a distance, which is not easy.

"Today we have 15 to 20 people. Cross Cars is our main business as a manufacturer. We do operations, we do manufacturing and any kind of trackdays. Then we added rallying and also some historic sportscar circuit racing [at events such as the Spa Classic] to our programme."

"Motorsport is a very complicated business. It's not so much fun honestly to work in all the time as you put in a lot of effort, and the return is very small, if there is some at all. However, I have always enjoyed being a manufacturer and a developer and somehow trying to grow the grassroots category like Cross Cars."

Today the company is managed by Raphael de Borman, who is assisted by Yannick, although Thierry still plays an instrumental role. Cross Cars has been a real success story and a passion project for Thierry, and LifeLive has played a key role in establishing the category on a global level.

Cross Cars is a cost-effective entry-level motorsport based around an off-road, rear-engined, four-wheel-drive buggy, featuring a tubular chassis and rollcage. Often powered by motorcycle engines, it has rapidly developed into a popular global junior category, with vehicles ranging from €5000-€10,000. Cross Cars has since been adopted as a discipline in the FIA Motorsport Games and is often seen as a class in national rallycross championships.

Neuville played a role in helping the FIA form

Cross Cars make up the bulk of LifeLive Motorsport's business

LIFELIVE

Two Hyundai i20 Rally2 cars have joined LifeLive fold

LIFELIVE
imao

LIFELIVE

Up to 20 people are employed at LifeLive's base in Saint Vith

LIFELIVE

Neuville has grown his hobby into a successful company

technical regulations for the Cross Car category. From there, LifeLive has since developed two Cross Cars, the TN5 (2019) and TN11 (2023), which it manufactures. The team has developed a distribution network across Europe, offering aspiring young drivers an affordable pathway into motorsport.

"We have developed them for the FIA and developed basically the assembly and the whole project for them to share with ASNs [national sporting authorities] around the world," explains Neuville. "For me, if you compare costs and fun, there is nothing better at the moment. It is cheaper than any karting, circuit or rallying category.

"We have a good team in place, and everybody has worked hard to make it happen. My part is mainly talking to the FIA and convincing them what should be the future strategy. That is all I can do; I'm not a designer or a welder or whatever."

Aside from the Cross Cars arm of the business, this year the operation has added a pair of Hyundai i20 Rally2 cars to its fold, which also includes a Toyota GR Yaris Rally2 that customers can rent. Former Citroen factory WRC driver Stephane Lefebvre jumped behind the wheel of a LifeLive prepared i20 Rally2 in the opening round of the FIA European Rally Championship in Sierra Morena in Spain, but the cars have been largely focused on competing in the Belgian Rally Championship, driven by Belgian former Junior WRC driver Tom Rensonnet and compatriot Niels Reynvoet.

News that Neuville added the Rally2 cars to his stable led to suggestions that maybe his team could be gearing up for a future in the WRC, especially given the uncertainty surrounding Hyundai's factory programme, which Neuville has been part of since the beginning in 2014. There were suggestions that a private team could step in to run Hyundai's WRC cars should it leave at the end of 2025, but it now appears that this is highly unlikely, with Neuville confident that Hyundai »

"There's nothing better at the moment. It's cheaper than any karting, circuit or rally category"

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JULIEN PIXELRALLYE

Chance to drive Citroen DS3 WRC was "crazy and mindblowing" for Lotterer

Engel (centre) and Lotterer (right) tried out Neuville's rally machines

will at least see out the current Rally1 rules cycle, which concludes at the end of 2026.

"I think we will be here next year but I have no confirmation," admits the 37-year-old. "I don't know what would be the point for Hyundai to retire now with one year left of the current regulations as everything is there."

But what of the future? With the WRC ushering in new regulations from 2027, targeting not only manufacturers but also tuner operations to join the championship with cars built around Rally2 componentry and to a €345,000 cost cap, could this entice a team such as LifeLive to make the step up? In short, Neuville doesn't see himself mirroring Malcolm Wilson as a rally driver-turned-team owner with grand plans to build up an operation like Wilson's M-Sport, where he finished as the WRC title runner-up in 2013.

"My recent focus was and is on trying to give me the opportunity to continue rallying and that is still my main target at the moment," he says. "After that I don't know for how long I will still be rallying. I would say it is promising for the near future, but what is beyond I don't know. Honestly, I have put a lot of effort and energy in rallying and I don't think I would have enough energy now to go and build up a team where we develop [cars]. Building a team and cars is nice but the difficult part is finding the funding to make it happen.

> *"Building a team and cars is nice but the difficult part is finding the funding to make it happen"*

"I think in the time we are living in it is not possible anymore. Malcolm has been living from manufacturer support for many years and he is struggling a lot at the moment, so that shows how difficult it is. Honestly, I have worked very hard for many years and I cannot give up everything I have got over the last year trying to build something that is a far dream. It would be far too risky."

Moving away from the serious talk of dreams of entering the WRC, Neuville has always liked to share his love of motorsport with others, and through LifeLive he regularly organises days to showcase rallying. Last month his close friends, three-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Andre Lotterer and FIA GT World Cup winner Maro Engel, were among guests who piloted Cross Cars and Neuville's own 2012 factory Citroen DS3 WRC and 2021 Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC on a closed asphalt stage in France.

"I made sure I had time because it has always been a dream of mine to try a WRC car," says Lotterer. "The Citroen was cool and you quickly feel at home. I loved the sequential gearbox, and it is incredible how well-developed the suspension is in those cars – and that car was from 2012.

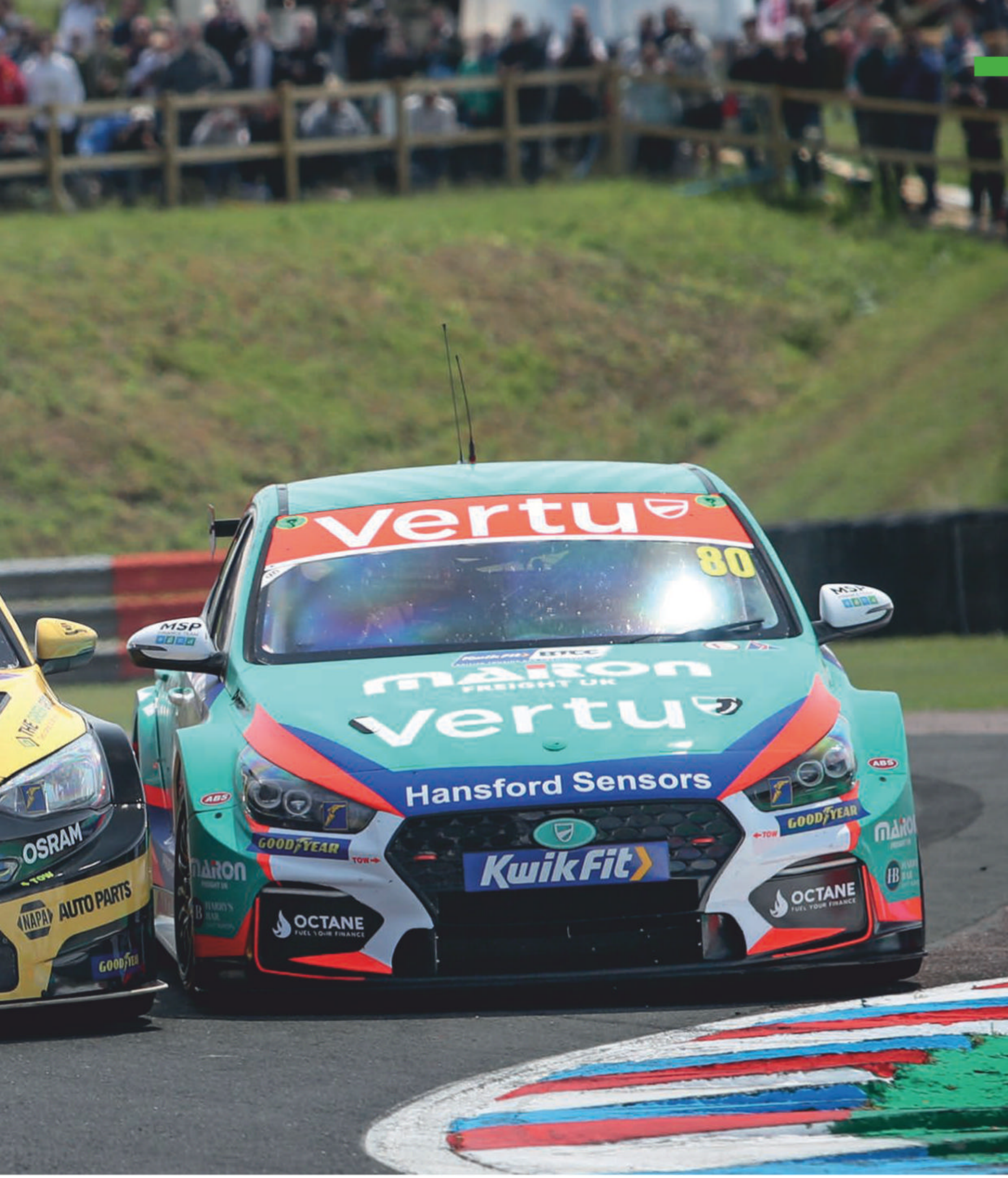
"Immediately you feel how agile the car is and you can always adapt and play with the car in a very controlled way, so it gives you a lot of confidence from the start. The car is really made for this situation and the grip window is quite wide and you can always do something.

"It's crazy and mindblowing. I was like, 'Oh my God, these guys are really crazy.' It's very impressive how they control in such tight spaces, and the speeds. When you don't know the road, you are thinking, 'No way is this going to work', and the car just does it – and he [Neuville] does it in a calm and precise manner. It is very impressive."

Fun trackdays aside, what does the future hold for Neuville's LifeLive Motorsport? Neuville's answer is intriguing, offering more questions than it provides answers: "I don't know but we are going to find out. We have a good team and we are restructuring a bit and putting everything in place to be better armed for what is coming."

Patience is a Vertu for Ingram

Ash Sutton (left) and Tom Ingram prove they *can* drive through the Thruxton chicane side by side (see p116 for what happened a few laps later) during the British Touring Car Championship opener at Thruxton. Ingram's Hyundai has just swept around the outside of the Ford, and there will be contact at the left apex a split second after this shot. But eventual winner Ingram will have to give up his lead because the safety car boards have emerged mid-manoeuvre. Luckily, after torrential rain marred Saturday qualifying, a sunny Sunday has brought the crowds flocking in. Many of them head for the new viewing area you can see at the top of the picture, and which runs all the way up Woodham Hill to the chicane.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BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP
RACE DEBRIEF

Ingram and Sutton about to run wide. Cammish and Doble actually use the track…

JEP

BTCC

INGRAM ON TOP AMID THE USUAL THRUXTON CHICANERY

How much time do you give back when you've taken a short cut? Or, to be more specific, how much time *can* you give back when the bloke behind you has taken the same short cut? Tom Ingram was in that invidious position on the way to a belated first British Touring Car Championship race victory of the year at Thruxton.

Some will say that, instead of it being an Ingram success, it was a moral second win of 2025 for Dan Cammish, the first driver home to actually drive all 19 laps of the Hampshire circuit…

It was just the latest in a chain of BTCC races at Thruxton that have been tainted by the victor taking a chicane short cut – see also Colin Turkington and Adam Morgan in recent seasons. At the same event, drivers were given 10-second penalties for repeated track-limits offences (this can be just one tyre a smidge too far over a white line), five seconds for being perhaps a couple of centimetres too far forward in their grid box. But hey, it's OK to flagrantly storm around the chicane.

Ingram did this because he can, and playing to the rules is what top drivers do. Change the rules, then. In mitigation, his Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N Fastback had taken a hit from Ash Sutton as Ingram tried to pass the Alliance Racing-run NAPA Ford Focus ST around the outside. The Ford got out of shape on the brakes, squirmed back the other way and knocked into the Hyundai. Both bailed out and took the short cut.

Behind them in a tight four-car clump for the lead had been Cammish, in the sister Ford to Sutton's, and Mikey Doble's Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra. At the previous sector, approaching Church Corner, third-placed Cammish was just 0.428s adrift of leader Sutton, with Doble 0.755s behind the leading Ford. By the time they got to the start/finish line, Ingram led by 0.975s from Sutton, who was 0.881s in front of Cammish. There was a slight backing-off from the leading pair in the next sector but, as they emerged from the Complex, Ingram was still 1.379s (down from 1.856s) in front of third-placed Cammish – and then all of the leading trio nailed their quickest sector two of the entire race…

"The only way I would have been able to give that time back to Cammish would be to let Ashley Sutton past, which they [the officials] wanted me to do and then return the favour [by penalising Sutton] after the race," explained Ingram. "Which seems utterly bonkers, but that's unfortunately what we're fighting against sometimes. Sometimes there's rules and sometimes there's common sense, and sometimes the two don't always go together. On this occasion, common sense did work out."

It did in the context of the existing rules. Ingram deserved his win within that framework, and who's to say that if, ahem, 'common sense' was to be applied and there were strict penalties for bypassing the chicane, drivers would be less ambitious than was Sutton under braking, knowing they couldn't take the easy route out?

Sutton, in any case, suffered his divine judgement later on in the most bizarre of circumstances. With just over four laps remaining, the championship leader

Rowbottom was a winner again

JEP

pressed the button for his single dose of TOCA Turbo Boost to get a run on Ingram. And then, suddenly, the Hyundai was pulling away. "It was the KwikFit sticker off the numberplate that covered the [turbo] inlet pipe and basically caused the air filter intake pipe almost to collapse, because it's trying to suck all the turbo pressure through," related Sutton. "If someone had said a KwikFit sticker was going to ruin my race… slightly disappointing if I'm honest!"

Soon Cammish was through to second, and Josh Cook to third, the 'King of Thruxton' on a stormer from 14th on the grid in his One Motorsport Honda Civic Type R. This was a stunning comeback from Cook, who had shunted heavily at Village in torrential rain in qualifying. The One crew did a fantastic job on the Honda. "Luckily the shell was absolutely intact," affirmed Cook. "It's a strong car. But everything else is new – front subframe, engine, gearbox, upright. The lot has been replaced." Cook himself was sent off to hospital in Winchester for an X-ray on an injured right foot, but was passed fit to race.

Sutton's fourth place presaged an astonishing start from this position in race two, the four-time champion jesting that it was "like having rear-wheel drive" and, with his Focus now having a TTB surplus over his immediate pursuers, that was that. Cook took the challenge to second-placed Ingram for a while before dropping back, and then the Civic failed the ride-height test after the race, somewhat ruining what had to date been a Sunday Thruxton fairytale.

The inheritor of Cook's trophy was Dan Rowbottom. The Alliance Ford pilot had thoroughly enjoyed his battle with reigning champion Jake Hill, enduring another beleaguering weekend with the West Surrey Racing BMW squad, with Cammish also slipping past the 3 Series. Rowbottom wasn't particularly happy with his Focus, but tweaks for race three put him in a much better place.

So too did his start. From fifth on the reversed grid, Rowbottom was second by the exit of the Complex, and next time around he zapped Hill at Segrave to grab the lead. Clever use of his TTB meant Rowbottom was out of arm's reach of Ingram by the time the Hyundai worked around Cammish on the penultimate lap, and that meant a second consecutive winning race weekend for a driver whose racecraft has come on in leaps and bounds.

Sutton should probably have been second, and may even have challenged Rowbottom, but a nerf from an apologetic Hill at the high-speed Noble sent both off onto the grass, the Ford spinning backwards before regaining the track. Sutton recovered to fifth behind impressive Excelr8 Hyundai returnee Senna Proctor, minimising his points loss to Ingram across the weekend.

"To qualify second [to Sutton], win, and two seconds is quite a good points score," summed up Ingram. "But even on a day like that we've only got six points back, which seems absolutely bonkers really." This is going to run and run, whether off track or on it.

MARCUS SIMMONS

Ingram's first win of 2025 season

JEP

RESULTS ROUND 4/10

RACE 1

1 **Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
19 laps in 28m16.617s

2 **Dan Cammish**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+1.214s

3 **Josh Cook**
Honda Civic Type R
(One Motorsport)
+5.199s

4 **Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+6.007s

5 **Dan Rowbottom**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+6.563s

RACE 2

1 **Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
16 laps in 20m37.454s

2 **Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+3.875s

3 **Dan Rowbottom**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+11.754s

4 **Dan Cammish**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+13.281s

5 **Jake Hill**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+13.752s

RACE 3

1 **Dan Rowbottom**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
18 laps in 24m29.588s

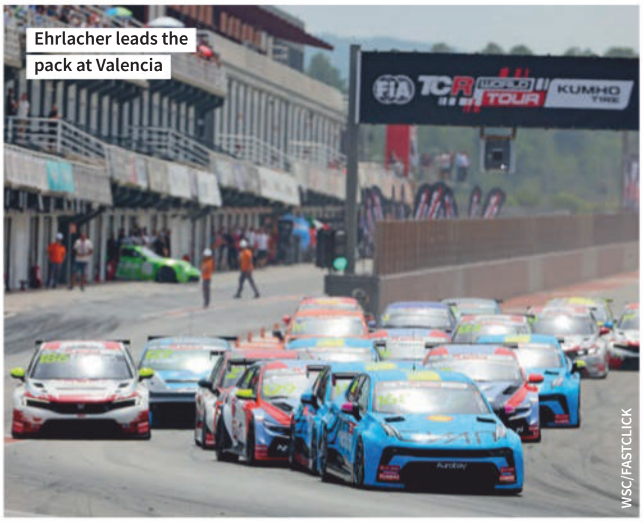
2 **Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+2.260s

3 **Dan Cammish**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+3.278s

4 **Senna Proctor**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+3.771s

5 **Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+6.991s

POINTS 1 **Sutton** 181; 2 Ingram 172; 3 Rowbottom 132.


Ehrlacher leads the pack at Valencia

WSC/FASTCLICK

TCR WORLD TOUR

EHRLACHER LYNKS TOGETHER TWO WINS FOR SERIES LEAD

Yann Ehrlacher became the leader of the TCR World Tour standings following the first two rounds thanks to a pair of victories at the Circuit Ricardo Tormo near Valencia, with the Lynk & Co 03 proving to be the car to beat.

The two-time World Touring Car Cup champion made a better start than polesitting team-mate Santiago Urrutia. They made light contact after the launch, but the Frenchman was ahead into Turn 1 and controlled the pace to lead a 1-2-3 for the team.

The reversed-grid second race provided most, if not all the action of the weekend. The Cupra of John Filippi started on pole, but was soon passed by Nestor Girolami, the Argentinian going from fifth to first in two laps and going on to take the first win of the season for Hyundai. This was despite a close run at the finish from the Honda of charging Estonian Ruben Volt *[with a name like that, he's surely a Formula E star of the future – ed]*, with Ehrlacher fighting his way from 10th to third.

Ehrlacher led a procession from pole to win race three from Urrutia and Girolami in the heat.

NEIL HUDSON

TCR SOUTH AMERICA/HERNAN CAPA

PIQUET PROGRESS Nelson Piquet Jr has one of the more varied palates of ex-Formula 1 drivers. He's this season plying his trade in TCR South America in a Honda Civic, and is pictured on his way to second place in race one at the recent Rio Hondo round behind the Peugeot of Pedro Cardoso. Piquet was third in the other race, and lies third in the championship.

BTCC

SUTTON FOCUS STILL ON BTCC AFTER GT3 DEBUT

Four-time British Touring Car Championship title winner Ash Sutton has batted off any suggestion that he will abandon the series any time soon to compete in GT racing.

The 31-year-old was given a surprise call-up by GT World Challenge Europe squad Paradine Competition to make his GT3 debut in the recent Endurance Cup round at Monza in a BMW M4 GT3 Evo. The request came from Paradine owner-driver Darren Leung with BMW factory driver Dan Harper, who filled the seat for the opening round at Paul Ricard, on clashing IMSA SportsCar duty at Detroit.

Sutton, who is ranked as a gold on the FIA driver categorisation list, took part in the Spa 24 Hours Prologue test – his first time behind the wheel of any GT3 car – as well as a day at Zandvoort to get up to speed with the M4, which he was to share in the Bronze Cup with Leung and silver-rated World Endurance Championship driver Sean Gelael.

Damage from a puncture early in the race scuppered Paradine's chances, but Sutton clawed back to sixth in the Bronze class during the final hour. On an average of 10 fastest laps for each BMW driver in that last stint, Sutton was just 0.273 seconds adrift of works pilot Kelvin van der Linde, with a best effort a mere 0.149s slower.

Before the trip, Sutton said he has "unfinished business" in the BTCC. With the Alliance Racing Ford Focus ST team, he is vying for a fifth title, and is currently the joint record holder on four with Andy Rouse and Colin Turkington.

"For sure if Darren said, 'Come and jump in', I would," he said at Thruxton. "GTs for me has whet the appetite shall we say for now. But am I done with British Touring Cars? No. It would be nice to do GT as a side programme. If I can be that driver they pull in, fantastic.

"I loved it. I enjoyed the BMW, GT3, and the whole endurance experience."

MARCUS SIMMONS

SRO/JEP

Sutton aboard the BMW at Monza

Wood (right) runs side by side with Mostert

KALISZ/GETTY IMAGES

AUSSIE SUPERCARS

FEENEY IN NEW YOUTH THREAT

Broc Feeney left Wanneroo Raceway in Perth with an enhanced points lead in the 2025 Supercars Championship and, perhaps, a clearer picture of who his challengers may be in the coming seasons.

The Triple Eight Chevrolet driver won two of the three races at Australia's westernmost venue to consolidate his points lead over team-mate Will Brown. But it was the race Feeney did not win that raised eyebrows when Ryan Wood became the newest Supercars race winner.

The 21-year-old took pole for one of the races and started second in another, but it was the opening race in which he impressed. He held out first Feeney, even on cold tyres, and then Brown to guide his Walkinshaw Andretti United Ford Mustang to the win.

Wood may have repeated the trick in the other races but for a suspension breakage and a clumsy challenge from James Golding. But still, he served notice that he could just be the next New Zealander to take some scalps in the series.

Feeney still leads the points table

KALISZ/GETTY IMAGES

Wood led Brown and WAU team-mate Chaz Mostert home in the opening race, with Feeney fourth. Feeney won the second race from Brown and Mostert, while Sunday's longer race ended with another Feeney victory on an unlikely podium. Having exited his first of two fuel tops with only half a fill, Matt Payne faced a tricky second half of the race, with extreme fuel saving his only option. But a well-timed safety car handed him an almost free stop and second place, and enough fuel to chase Feeney to a narrow 0.57-second win.

If that was a surprise, then third place was a downright shock. When Payne pitted, veteran James Courtney simply followed him and emerged close behind, in third place. Courtney, who will retire at the end of this season, took minnow Blanchard Racing Team's Ford to the team's first podium finish in its fifth season of competition.

PHIL BRANAGAN

RACE WINNERS 31 May - 15 June

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

Wanneroo 7-8 June

Race 1	**Ryan Wood** (WAU Ford)
Races 2 & 3	**Broc Feeney** (Triple Eight Chevrolet)

POINTS 1 **Feeney** 1181; 2 Will Brown 1109; 3 Matthew Payne 1058.

TCR WORLD TOUR

Valencia 14-15 June

Races 1 & 3	**Yann Ehrlacher** (Cyan Racing Lynk & Co 03)
Race 2	**Nestor Girolami** (BRC Hyundai Elantra N)

POINTS 1 **Ehrlacher** 152; 2 Santiago Urrutia 146; 3 Esteban Guerrieri 145.

NASCAR CUP SERIES

Nashville 1 June

Ryan Blaney
(Team Penske Ford)

Michigan 8 June

Denny Hamlin
(Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota)

Mexico City 15 June

Shane van Gisbergen
(Trackhouse Racing Chevrolet)

POINTS 1 **William Byron** 604; 2 Kyle Larson 537; 3 Christopher Bell 524.

'THE GIZ' DOES 'THE BIZ' IN MEXICO CITY NASCAR

NASCAR's first points-paying Cup Series race outside the United States in 67 years ended with its biggest winning margin in 16 years – courtesy of a New Zealander.

Shane van Gisbergen and his Trackhouse Racing Chevrolet utterly dominated at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez in Mexico City to take the chequered flag by 16.567 seconds over Christopher Bell, and the second Cup win of his career.

That was despite an unwell van Gisbergen being sick on the morning of the race, and Trackhouse showing up a day late due to travel glitches. Van Gisbergen revealed that his pal Max Verstappen had advised him on lines and braking zones, which presumably he'll reciprocate should the Dutchman ever wish to race at Manfeild or Hampton Downs.

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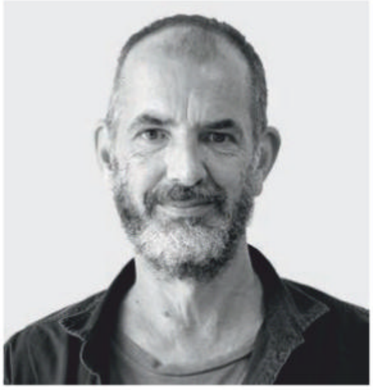


INSIDER

Beware an advantage in the BTCC, even if it's not unfair, says Marcus Simmons

The British Touring Car Championship has a problem. Or rather, a problem looming that could need averting in the not too distant future. For at least three years, there have been grumbles about the straightline speed of the Hyundai i30 N from the Tom Ingram-led Excelr8 Motorsport. Now, as we get to mid-season, Ingram is partnered by three race-winning team-mates, and Independent team Restart Racing, newly equipped with Hyundais for 2025, has two more on its books...

At Thruxton, Alliance Racing Ford racer Dan Cammish was moved to say of Ingram: "I think he tried to pass me when I was on the [TOCA Turbo Boost] button and he wasn't. To me they've got a lot of straightline speed." Two weeks earlier, at Snetterton, Jake Hill remarked: "At Brands [where Hill and his West Surrey Racing BMW team-mates won all three races] we were by far the best car at Clearways, yet we're still 3mph down at the start/finish line compared to a certain team, so figure that one out."

Recent history is peppered with teams lobbying BTCC organiser TOCA to turn boost levels up on their cars, but in this case it's one model they want turning *down*. Hill again: "We have to pray that TOCA are going to have a look at the engine side and hopefully we'll get a bit of help back, but that's not for me to say. We're trying, as is everybody up and down the grid, to get the Hyundais turned down because unfortunately it's going to be very much a one-horse race."

The reason for this is that the BMW 330i M Sport, due to its engine characteristics, is already allowed the highest base boost level by TOCA, with the Ford Focus ST and Toyota Corolla GR Sport level-pegging below it. And which particular South Korean model do you think runs the lowest base boost? A high base boost means increased engine temperatures, so the performance gain from any further increase in boost is not linear. Additionally, the removal of hybrid for this season, with the 'overtaking' TTB now delivered solely from the turbo, has resulted in an additional 400 millibars of boost. Certainly, WSR and Toyota team Speedworks Motorsport believe this gives an advantage on deployment to teams running from a lower base boost.

TOCA has been monitoring performance via an evolving series of data points and parameters since the birth of the NGTC formula 14 years ago. They are constantly looked into and certain engines may be turned up or down. But this hasn't happened so far in 2025, and TOCA technical chief Sam Riches reckons the field is closer in parity than it was at this point last year. Swindon Powertrain, which builds the Hyundai engines, has made just one homologation change for this year, with a revised inlet manifold, so it's not as if the goalposts have suddenly been moved.

The pace of the Hyundai, new for 2020, was not revealed until Ingram arrived at Excelr8 for the next season, with engineer Spencer Aldridge. "Everyone says the engine, everyone sees the speed traps, but the car's in a good window," says Aldridge. "If you look through the Cammish pole lap from Snetterton or any of the onboards on TV, our minimum speed's generally higher. Our mid-corner speed is good, braking performance is good, the overall package is good. Obviously the engine's quite strong as well.

"We're doing a bloody good job as a team. We spent a lot of money on chassis development. If we'd won every race so far, maybe there's grounds for someone to have a quibble, but ultimately we're doing a better job."

One advantage that Aldridge has been candid about is the aerodynamic qualities of the i30's Fastback shape. Somehow, Alliance Racing manages to squeeze more and more performance out of the squat, hatchback, fourth-generation Focus ST, which, like the Hyundai, was born for the 2020 season. The team's lead driver, Ash Sutton, frequently relates stories of rethinks on set-up over the course of a race weekend; Ingram usually professes delight with the state in which his machine hits the track for FP1.

> ***"If we'd won every race, maybe there's grounds for a quibble, but ultimately we're doing a better job"***

"When you watch onboard footage," says Aldridge, "it's generally sixth gear we're closing on the car in front, where our aero and low-drag platform has its biggest effect. TOCA aren't trying to balance the cars for aero efficiency. Their parameters are much lower in the speed range, before engine performance gets negated by the aero effect."

Excelr8 is to be congratulated for producing such a competitive package within the rules and parameters. This is the way of motorsport. But we live in an era of the dreaded balance of performance. TOCA can rightly be happy with its 25-car field and multitude of different winners this season. But it needs to be on guard in case the perception of the customers – in this case the drivers – is that there are only one or two competitive options.

THE NEARLY MAN OF SUPER TOURING

As Super Touring Power approaches, it's time to step back with one of the event's special guests. He was twice runner-up, and once even scored more points than the champion...

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY **JEP**

Will Hoy, Tim Harvey, Joachim Winkelhock, Gabriele Tarquini, John Cleland, Frank Biela, Alain Menu, Rickard Rydell, Laurent Aiello... Anthony Reid.

If you thought we were listing the title winners from the British Touring Car Championship's halcyon Super Touring era, that last name will have thrown you. But actually, it's a rollcall of the top points scorers from each season. Reid, you see, fell foul of the dropped scores ruling that gifted a second title to Menu in 2000. Not only that, but in his case he could only count his best 19 results from the 24 races, rather than the regulation 20...

"What happened was, at Croft I finished third in one of the races, and they discovered that my ECU had a problem – I think it had got damaged," relates Reid 25 years later of the season in which he went head to head with Prodrive Ford Mondeo team-mates Menu and Rydell for the crown. "The codes didn't match the TOCA codes, so I had to drop third place, but I couldn't use that as a dropped score because of a technical infringement. In hindsight I should have just gone home earlier and not raced, and I would have been able to use that as a dropped score, which would have made the difference..."

Reid lost that crown by two points to Menu, whose four non-finishes neatly took care of his dropped scores. The 10 he lost that day in North Yorkshire would have swung things in his favour by eight. The Scot can justifiably regard himself as the lost champion from the Super Touring era, which continues to be celebrated – most notably at the Super Touring Power extravaganza at Brands Hatch. Reid will be one of the star guests at the third edition, which takes place on 28-29 June.

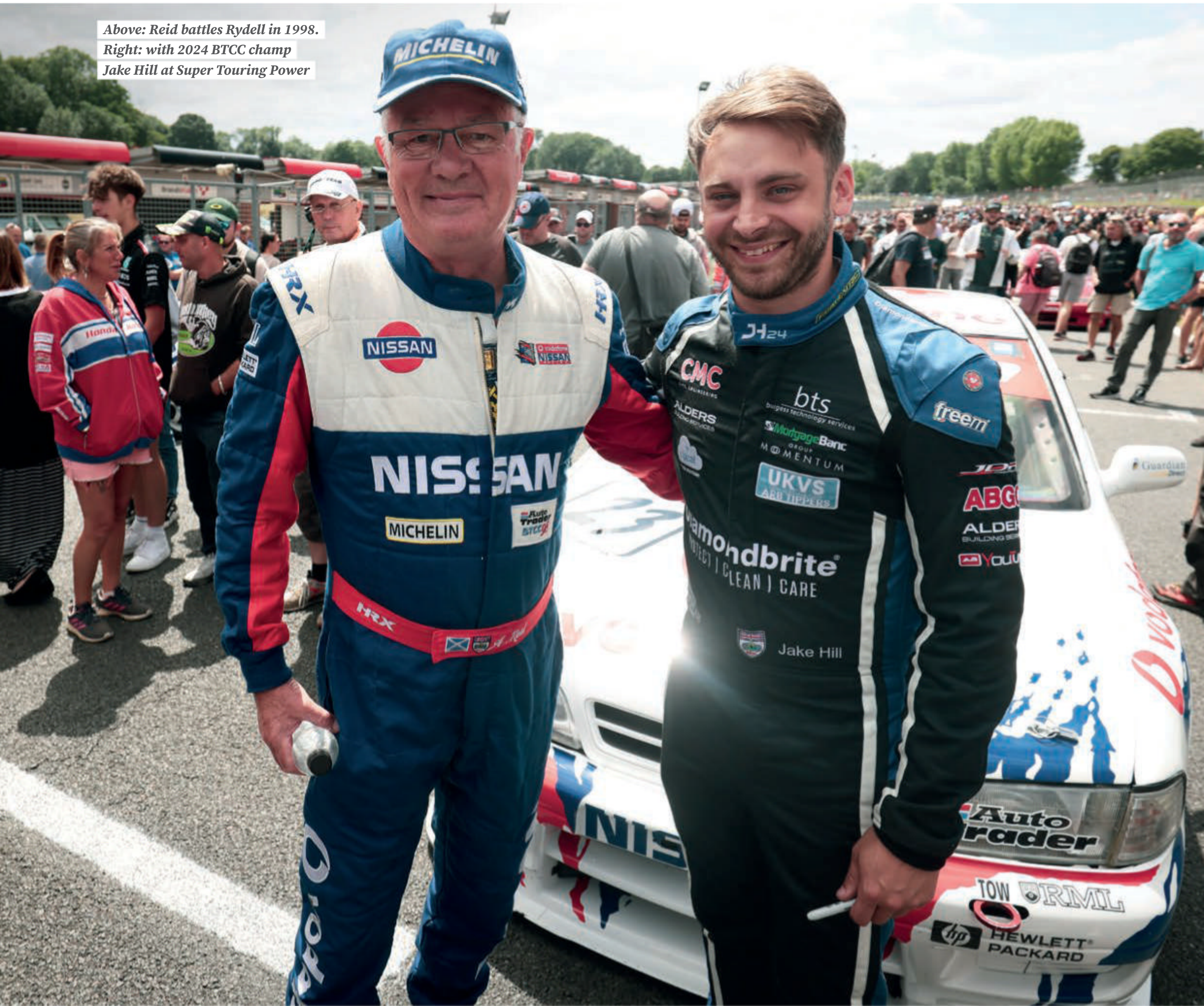
He has, of course, rekindled memories at this event in 2023 and 2024 by racing the Nissan Primera, the model in which he shot to BTCC prominence in 1997 and 1998, when he was runner-up for the first time, narrowly defeated by Rydell and Volvo.

But Reid's Super Touring history goes back further. He had already dovetailed his 1993 Japanese Formula 3 programme (he stayed on in that series after beating Jacques Villeneuve, Rydell and Tom Kristensen to the 1992 crown) with a campaign in Japan's final season of Group A with a BMW M3. He was then signed up by HKS for Japan's inaugural Super Touring championship in 1994 with the Opel Vectra. That took him into the orbit of RML, which was running the same cars under Vauxhall Cavalier badging in the BTCC. John Cleland won the 1995 crown in the UK, while Reid's seven wins across 1994-95 in Japan ran in parallel with a BTCC testing programme. RML chief Ray Mallock attributed much of his team's success to Reid's input – to the irritation of Cleland.

"It's not difficult to wind up John!" chuckles Reid. "The top teams had their test drivers during that period." Then he digresses: "As time goes by the memories become richer, and you begin to realise what a special period it was, because of the involvement of major car manufacturers, the way it was promoted on BBC *Grandstand*, and Murray Walker, Steve Rider presenting. What really raised the profile of British Touring Cars at the time was the PlayStation game. It brought a whole new wave of interest from the younger spectators."

> ***"As time goes by memories become richer, and you begin to realise what a special period it was"***

But before Reid headed to the BTCC, there was a season in the German Super Touring Cup in 1996, after signing a two-year deal with Nissan Motorsports Europe. "I raced in a couple of the World Cup races, at Donington and Paul Ricard, during that period [1994-95]," he explains. "I came to the attention of the Japanese manufacturers, and I was racing in the Spanish Touring Car Championship when I was approached by Alec »



Above: Reid battles Rydell in 1998.
Right: with 2024 BTCC champ
Jake Hill at Super Touring Power

Poole, so we got talking and thrashed out a deal."

The ebullient Poole led NME's Super Touring programme and was putting the building blocks in place for Nissan's late-1990s prominence in the category. "It was NME based in Didcot, headed up by [Kazuo] Hioki-san with Alec underneath," remembers Reid, "but you had some great engineers like Ricardo Divila, Bob Neville, Derek Gardner part-time.

"The great thing for me regarding the Nissan is that car had my DNA in it – it really suited my driving style, and it was one of my favourite periods of my career. When Ray Mallock came in, I strongly recommended RML to Nissan, that they should chat and try and get a deal done. I had the good fortune to drive for some of the top teams in the country."

> ***"The great thing for me regarding the Nissan is it had my DNA in it – it really suited my driving style"***

That was for 1997, when Mallock jumped ship from Vauxhall, seduced by Nissan allowing him the two Scottish talents he wanted: Reid and David Leslie. This was the second year of Reid's initial deal with Nissan, but the first had been at BMS Scuderia Italia, the ex-F1 team running him alongside Sascha Maassen and Ivan Capelli: "It was a great experience to race in Germany, but the tracks were not great – airfield circuits like Zweibrucken and Wunstorf – but to race at Hockenheim and the Nurburgring, and we had a really strong results at the Salzburgring [in Austria, two thirds]… Working with an Italian team was interesting. They'd bring *two* chefs to the circuit – during testing we'd quite often have a lengthy lunch and miss the first part of the afternoon session!"

Early-season reliability problems in 1997 did not prevent Reid showing his speed, and a clash with champion-to-be Menu's Renault at Brands Hatch resulted in BHP, the company that produced the *Grandstand* highlights, often choosing the #23 Nissan for installation of its onboard camera… "Alain turned in quite late for Clearways and I dived in quite late, but I tagged his rear end," he laughs. "And of course, then there was the parc ferme where he was slagging me off, and he didn't know I was standing directly behind him!"

A first UK win in touring cars since 1993 for Nissan was recorded by Reid in heat one for the end-of-season Tourist Trophy non-championship event at Donington Park. But in heat two, for which the field started in reverse order of qualifying times, he was taken out. "I always jokingly over a beer or two with John Cleland say, 'You cost me 25,000 quid', because that was the prize if you could win the final," says Reid. "I was coming through the field and John did the classic coming down the Craner Curves. He waited until I was just going past him and flicked the steering wheel, which clipped the back of my car and spun me round, flat-spotted my tyres. Between David and myself, we agreed to split the prize money if either one of us won it."

That was the precursor to Reid's title fight against Rydell in 1998. And, as in 2000, he has hard-luck stories to explain the eventual 15-point deficit to the Swede, whose Volvo S40 was run by Tom Walkinshaw's TWR operation: "You can always say ifs and buts, but thinking back on it, I was racing against Rickard at Thruxton [on the opening weekend] and he'd just got into the lead, and within two laps I couldn't see where I was going. I think it was the old trick, of overfilling the engine with oil, and the breather pipe was out the back of the car. It was like something out of a frigging James Bond film!" Reid's podium disappeared – he was 13th after pitting for the oil to be cleared from his windscreen.

And then there was Donington Park in mid-June, famous for the 'Mansell race' won by Cleland, less remembered for Reid finally taking his maiden BTCC win in the earlier sprint. "The car was flying, and the mistake I made was during the second race," he recalls. "Because I was leading again, I was given the option to pit first [this was during the era of mandatory tyre changes in feature races]. It had started raining but ever so lightly, so I made the mistake of choosing intermediate tyres. Everyone else went onto wets as the rain became heavier, and it looks like Mansell hit me off the circuit, but he didn't. My car started aquaplaning and it just spun round and I went off the track."

And let's throw in the infamous Brands race, where a bump-and-run by Reid on Rydell at Druids resulted in the stewards reversing the result, and a highly amusing parc ferme outbreak of aggression by the usually mild-mannered Volvo man on his Nissan counterpart. "I call that the zenith of Super Touring, that weekend," Reid asserts. "So much had taken place. They entered Tiff Needell in a third works Nissan for a *Top Gear* feature, and there was Nigel in the Ford. Tiff and Nigel had a bit of a set to in the paddock, and then you add in the intensity of the battle for the championship between Rickard and myself, and the shenanigans on the track…"

By then, Reid was bound for Ford, with a two-year deal for 1999-2000. "A lot of people were surprised," he admits. "But the thing is, when the Blue Oval makes you an offer you can't refuse it, and of course you're a long time retired in the motor racing business. I'm still racing of course [Reid is in his 50th consecutive year of racing], but I don't really get paid these days. And I had a young family, and thought, 'This'll set me up'. I knew that Nissan was going to pull out at the end of the following year, so I was thinking I guess of the financial situation. But I also believed I could shoot for the championship in the second year, and Prodrive – another great team."

He did but, as great as the Mondeo was, Reid acknowledges that "the rear end was a bit too edgy for me. It was a quicker car, but it didn't quite suit my style of driving like the Nissan had."

Thanks to assaults from Gabriele Tarquini and Vincent Radermecker over that incredibly dramatic final weekend at Silverstone, the Super Touring era bowed out with Reid not quite a champion but, 25 years on, one of the heroes of the time: "Super Touring was like an arms race, but I feel very fortunate to have had the best of it – both Nissan and Ford towards the end of that period. It was a fantastic experience."

Honda and Vauxhall attacks kiboshed 2000 title bid at Silverstone

NME chiefs Poole and Hioki key to Nissan success...

...as was relationship with Leslie, favourite team-mate of Reid

Reid in discussion with RML team chief Mallock

McKLEIN

Building year in 1996 in German series. No chefs pictured...

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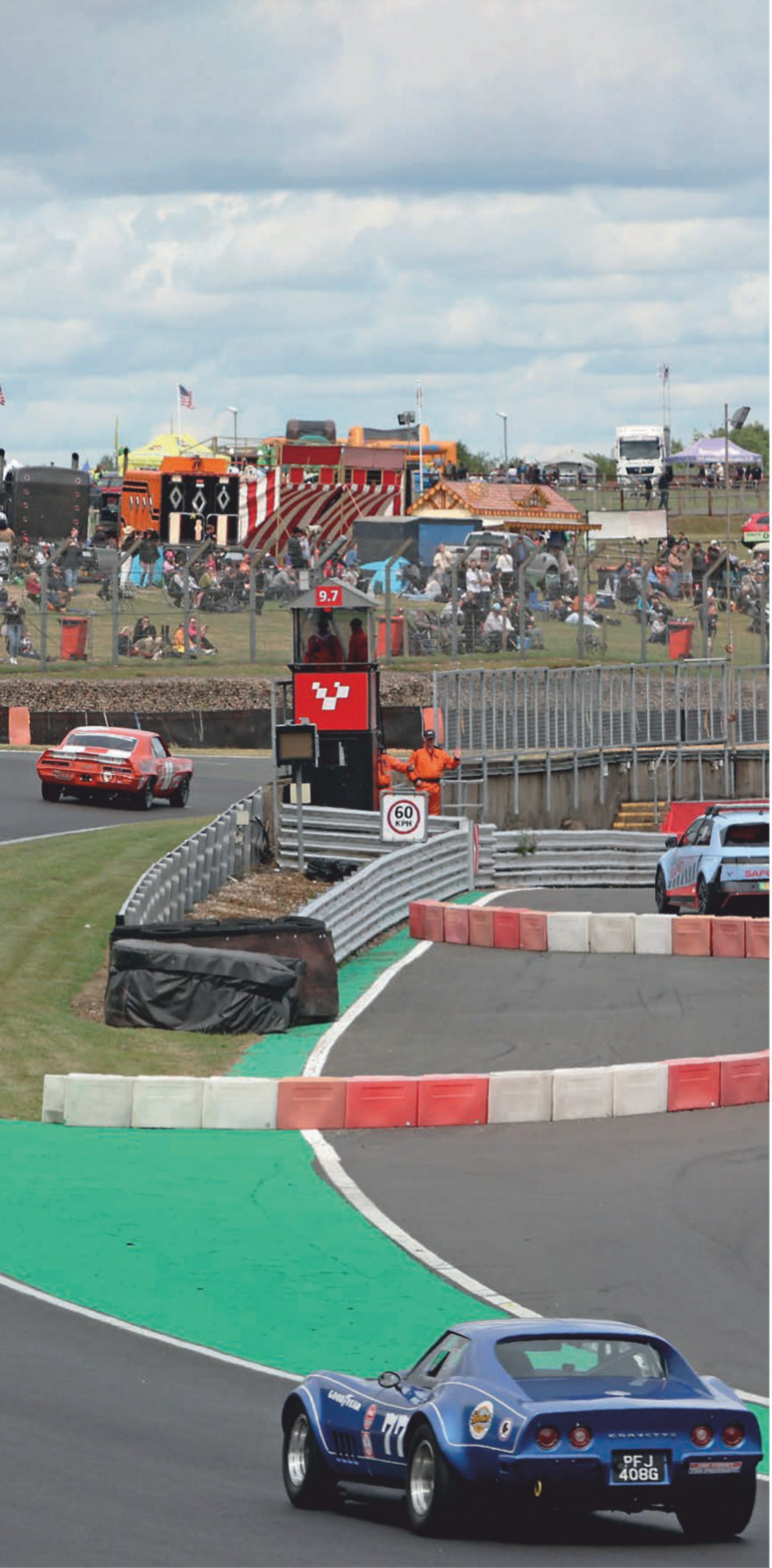

US muscle is flexed at Brands

While the NASCAR Euro Series tops the bill for the American SpeedFest event at Brands Hatch, there is plenty of other US-themed racing on offer. Back for a second edition, after a successful debut last year, were a pair of special Ford vs Chevy races from the organisers of Bernie's V8s. Here the likes of Camaros and Corvettes are pitted against the Mustang masses to create a brilliant assault on all the senses. It was the Chevys that emerged triumphant with wins for Tim Davis (Corvette C3) and Jake Swann (Camaro, leading).

Photographer Gary Hawkins

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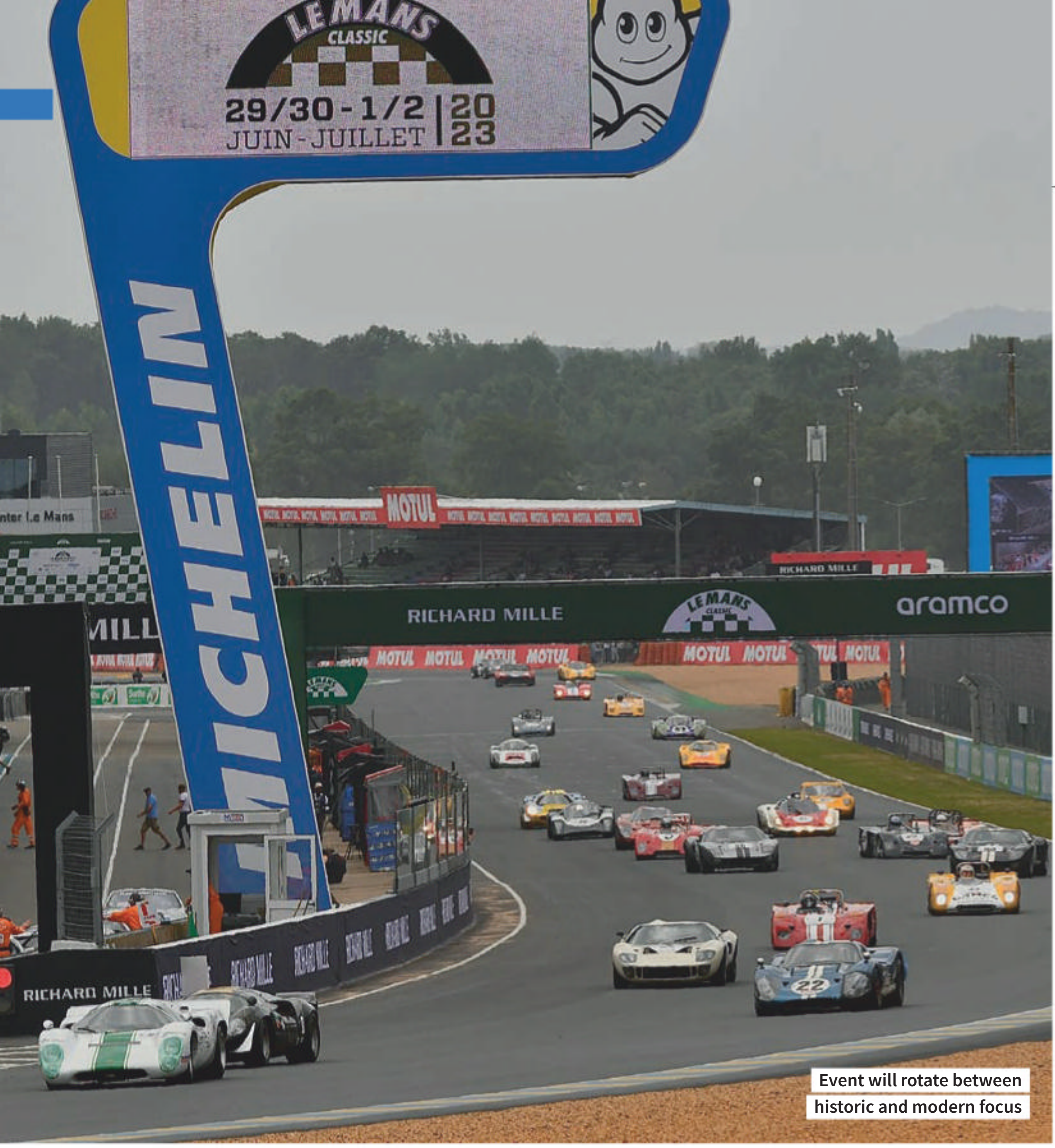


Event will rotate between historic and modern focus

PETER BAKER/RETRO-SPEED

HISTORICS

Le Mans Classic to be annual

Two different versions of the historic extravaganza will be created, while new series for recent sportscars is launched

STEPHEN LICKORISH

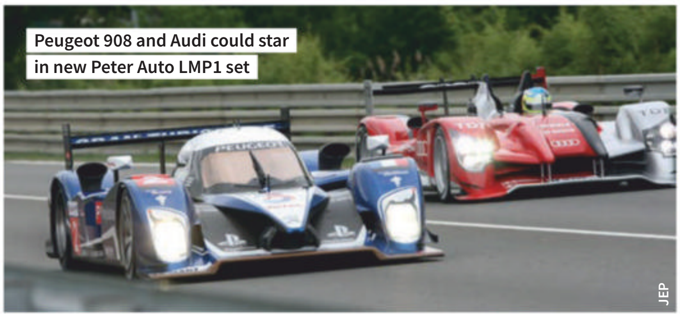
The Le Mans Classic historic racing extravaganza will become an annual event that will rotate between two versions catering for machinery of different eras.

It was announced during this year's Le Mans 24 Hours that separate Le Mans Classic Heritage and Legends iterations of the event will be developed. The Heritage fixture will be similar to the current event and focus on older cars from up to 1975, that year being chosen to mirror the arrival of turbos in key racing categories. The Le Mans Classic Legends meeting will be focused on modern machinery, including a new series from organiser Peter Auto that caters for near-current prototypes and GTs, featuring cars that competed at Le Mans as recently as 2016.

"The idea is we have a full event already with the six grids, and when Le Mans Classic was created in 2002, the grids were for until the beginning of the '80s," explained Peter Auto managing director Marc Ouayoun. "Now we have the Endurance Classic Legends, we have the Group C, and we have even cars that are more recent, like we just announced with the Legends of Le Mans.

"We thought that it would be great to give more running time to our gentlemen drivers and also to create two different events – one that's a bit more vintage, a tribute to the endurance legends pre-'70s and all the big battles for Ferrari, the 917 story, the Jaguar years. It will have lots of historic motor cars, and a very nice atmosphere.

"And the other Le Mans Classic will be a bit more dynamic. There will be five grids instead of six, so we have a little bit more racing time for every grid. It's going to be very exciting because we will also have support races."



Peugeot 908 and Audi could star in new Peter Auto LMP1 set

JEP

Ouayoun said more details about 2026 will be revealed at this year's Le Mans Classic, scheduled for 3-6 July.

Also beginning next year will be Peter Auto's new Le Mans Legends Series, which will support selected rounds of the World Endurance Championship. It is open to recent LMP1 and LMP2 machinery, with the respective cut-off points set to be 2012 and 2016, along with GT cars from a similar era. This will be the next step from the organisation's Endurance Racing Legends category, which is predominantly for sportscars constructed up until 2005.

"We see a lot of interest for classic cars, but we see also a young generation who are more fascinated by more modern cars like cars from the year 2000 and they're already 25 years old," said Ouayoun. "So we have the Ferrari F430, the Pescarolo and, more recently, the Peugeot 908, the Audi [LMP1s], the Zytek, the Porsche 911 RSR, the Corvettes. These cars sound so well and they're totally iconic already today."

It was also revealed during Le Mans that Peter Auto had agreed a new partnership with Stephane Ratel to launch a GT3 Revival Series for GT3 cars built between 2006 and 2013.

STEVE JONES

New MGB series will be open to parent/child pairings, like the Drabbles

HISTORICS

MRL TO INTRODUCE NEW GENERATIONS TROPHY

Motor Racing Legends will launch a new Generations Trophy series that will be a one-make MGB category for parent/child teams.

A pilot race for the new contest is due to be held at Silverstone in October before a full calendar of fixtures takes place next year. The category is designed to be an accessible and friendly entry point into historic motorsport for the next generation of competitors, and there will be a class system that takes into account the cumulative age of the driver pairings.

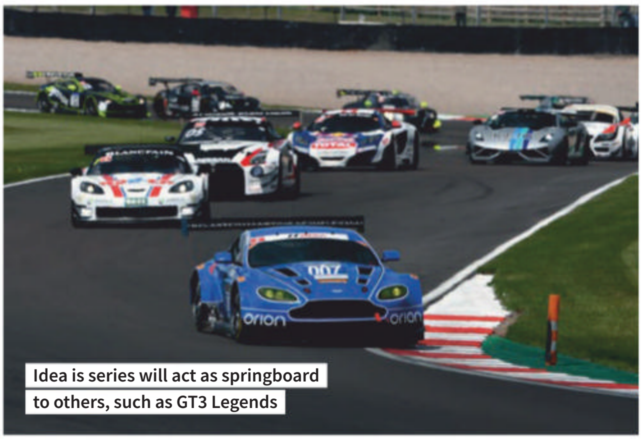
Races will be an hour long and the series will be open to FIA-specification pre-1966 MGBs, with more details being announced soon.

"We're coming up with the regs at the moment but the idea behind that is we're really trying to make it affordable," explained MRL chairman Shaun Lynn. "We're talking about having a hub dyno to check the power of the cars, make it a stock suspension, stock gearbox, stock engine, and we're also taking consideration of the age of the pairing to try to give everybody a fair shot.

"The idea is it will run with Julius [Thurgood] at HRDC weekends and will be an intro to classic racing, seeing the sights and sounds of the paddock. Yes, you will see GT3, but you will also see pre-war cars, E-types and how beautiful they are and give you the confidence to get on track in an MGB. They're not the quickest, but they're not the slowest, they're such a versatile car and, once you've built one and you're doing it with your mum or your dad, you can go and do the Spa Six Hours or do the Tour Auto. You can do so many different things with these little cars, you're not trapped into just doing this one series."

This will be the second new category created since Lynn took the helm of MRL, following in the footsteps of the GT3 Legends series, which has proven to be an immediate hit after a successful pilot race at the end of last year.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Idea is series will act as springboard to others, such as GT3 Legends

STEVE JONES

P138 LYNN'S VISION FOR MRL

HISTORIC MODSPORTS SEEKS FRESH HOME

The Historic Modsports and Special Saloons series will run a revised calendar for the rest of this year, with a longer-term goal of featuring at major historic meetings after splitting with the Historic Sports Car Club.

Low numbers led to the series being withdrawn from the HSCC's meeting at Cadwell Park in May, and 16 cars instead ran as invitational entries alongside the Scottish Motor Racing Club's Classic Sports and Saloon Championship at the same circuit on 15 June. The two previously combined at Croft's Battle of Britain meeting and will do so again this August.

Series chairman Steve Watton expects grids to grow when several drivers return with refurbished cars. "They're not off-the-shelf cars," he explained. "They're not like Pre-'66, where you've got 1000 MGBs or whatever to pick from and so, consequently, a lot of them hadn't run for a while and they were trying it out.

"I'm the same. I've got the Rover P6 special saloon that was quite a horrendous bit of kit when I tried to drive it at Croft, so I'm rebuilding that."

Further dates may be added to this season's calendar, with talks ongoing to secure the series a permanent home from next year. "This year we can't do any more than just run as invitation cars within somebody else's series," said Watton. "I would like it to be the SMRC but it's just a matter of whether it comes together."

MARK PAULSON

RICHARD STYLES

JEP

SUPER TOURING POWER

TURKINGTON AND INGRAM TO RACE AT SUPER TOURING EVENT

British Touring Car Championship title winners Colin Turkington and Tom Ingram will both experience a new era of tin-top competition on their Super Touring Power debuts at Brands Hatch this weekend.

Four-time BTCC conqueror Turkington will sample a Super Tourer for the first time when he drives Jason Hughes's ex-Jason Plato Vauxhall Vectra (above) on Saturday, before switching to a more familiar MG ZS on Sunday.

"I've driven touring cars from before that era, but I've never driven a Super Touring car, so I'm obviously really looking forward to that," said Turkington, who has appeared in various club and historic categories this season after missing out on a BTCC drive.

"My eyes lit up watching touring cars from when I was young and then racing in Fiestas, so that was my focus, and it's perfect to get my first taste of a Super Touring car on the GP circuit."

Ingram, meanwhile, will campaign a Ford Sierra Cosworth RS500 in the Group A events. The 2022 BTCC champion has been given the opportunity to race the Jeremy Sutton-owned Sierra, which sports the Benson & Hedges livery made famous in the Australian Touring Car Championship, because one of the crew members of Ingram's BTCC team Excelr8 Motorsport also works on the RS500.

"I won't have driven it before the race, so I'll go straight into the race weekend fairly blind with it," Ingram said. "It'll be good fun. I think it's a fairly good car. I've driven stuff from prior eras at Goodwood and stuff like that, but this will be the first time I've filled in the gap. I'd like to jump into a Super Tourer as well, but an RS500 is going to be quite an eye-opening experience."

The finest hour for Benson & Hedges-liveried Sierras came in 1988 when Tony Longhurst and Tomas Mezera won the Bathurst 1000 at Mount Panorama.

MARCUS SIMMONS

Benson & Hedges livery was synonymous with Aussie Sierras

JEP

HILLCLIMB

BOSHIER-JONES REUNITES WITH OLD CAR, 65 YEARS ON

David Boshier-Jones, one of Britain's greatest hillclimbers, was reunited at the age of 93 with the Cooper Mk9/10 in which he won the 1958, 1959 and 1960 British Hillclimb Championships on the eve of the Prescott Historique event in May.

Following a two-year restoration, current custodian Charles Reynolds – of Ford Motorsport, Prodrive, Nissan and World Rally Championship fame – took the JAP V-twin engined car to Boshier-Jones's home in South Wales for a family reunion.

Sixty-five years on, David, his wife Cath, their daughters Rosemary and Susan, and brother Peter – a top Lotus hillclimber in the 1960s – relived memories of a wonderfully successful era.

Newport garage director 'Bosh' raced one of Cyril Kieft's locally built 500cc Formula 3 cars before switching to the Cooper-JAP in Mk9 circuit specification. In 1956 he finished fourth in the British Racing & Sports Car Club's Autosport national championship behind Jim Russell, Ivor Bueb and Stuart Lewis-Evans in Cooper-Nortons.

Unable to spare time to travel with a growing family, he found his forte on the hills, for which the Cooper chassis's engine bay was lengthened to accommodate the larger 1100cc JAP in 1957. After a promising introductory season, he dominated, winning 21 national hillclimb rounds over the following three years and plundering records aplenty.

Celebrating Boshier-Jones's ultimate outright record on Prescott's original 880-yard course, and the first he set in winning on the 1128-yard version's 1960 debut, Reynolds demonstrated the Cooper at the Bugatti Owners Club's annual retrospective.

MARCUS PYE

CHARLES REYNOLDS

GARY HAWKINS

Ellis's NASCAR and Sunbeam steeds were very different

EURO NASCAR

ELLIS STARS IN TWO CARS AT SPEEDFEST

Matthew Ellis delivered an eye-catching drive at June's American SpeedFest event when he came close to converting his last-minute deal into NASCAR Euro Series victory. And he did it while doubling up from the undercard, driving a car that could hardly be more different.

Ellis can more regularly be found at the wheel of the 45-year-old Talbot Sunbeam Lotus that he shares with father Martyn. Its twin-cam engine has been extended to 2.5 litres, runs throttle bodies, a standalone ECU and dry sump. Colin Chapman's maxim of 'adding lightness' has been followed throughout, and Sunbeam specialist Phil Seaman has helped transform it into a weapon. Ellis Jr finished second against much more powerful machinery in the Bernie's V8s series at Brands Hatch.

The Sunbeam has almost nothing in common with NASCAR Euro Series' 5.7-litre behemoths weighing in at 1250kg. Ellis's prior experience of that category amounted to three outings, the last two years ago. Despite no experience of the new sequential gearbox, he qualified eighth before shining in treacherous race conditions.

Ellis, fifth in the queue at the early restart, used the outside line to charge into second before passing Thomas Toffel for the lead. "I was like, 'Boys, this is good. There's so much grip,'" he smiled. "I had a little bit in reserve for quite a long time. It was only when I then got told they were like a second behind I started pushing and decided I wasn't going to fade back. I was going to go out to win that, no matter what."

For much of the race, only former Lamborghini Super Trofeo driver Jordan O'Brien was quicker. The American was able to unlap himself after losing ground in the pits.

"I didn't realise the #22, under the green flag, had done a full wet set-up," said Ellis. "The rest of us were on bone-dry stiff settings and just bolted wets on. So when he came by I was like, 'If he can do it, then the rest of them are going to be doing that.' So I tried every line, every braking position. Obviously it didn't quite work one lap. I missed that braking point by five yards."

Five laps from home, Ellis ploughed through the Paddock Hill gravel and, in his frustration, spun again at Surtees. He finished eighth. A big blow-up while running third on the road meant he had nothing to show from Sunday's race either. But he had made his mark. "I would love to do more, and I think these cars do suit me – I just need a bit more seat time," Ellis reflected.

MARK PAULSON

GARY HAWKINS

Ellis was leading opener until trouble struck

PAUL LAWRENCE

FOUR SUMMERS TAKE TO THE HILL

The Summers clan (above) made hillclimbing history at Shelsley Walsh when four members of the family competed in the over two-litre single-seater class during a British Hillclimb round. Former champion Alex and his mother Lindsay shared their DJ Firestorm, while Alex's father Richard and his wife Debbie shared their self-built AFS P4T.

NEW SUV SHELSLEY HILL RECORD FOR EV

Gabriela Jilkova set a new SUV hill record for Shelsley Walsh at the wheel of a prototype Porsche Cayenne EV. Czech Jilkova, a GT4 racer, knocked four seconds off the old SUV best. "This is my first ever hillclimb," she said. "There is no room for a mistake here!"

MORLEY SCORES YET ANOTHER GP WIN

Division 1 Superkart driver Liam Morley won his 11th Grand Prix title at Donington Park recently with a magical display, and was never headed. Lee Harpham, the previous GP plate holder, had to settle for second. Nick Schembri, Australian champion, was third.

HOLDER RETIRES FROM THE CSCC

Classic Sports Car Club director Hugo Holder has retired from the club, having held an integral role with the organiser for the past 17 years. During that time, Holder has also served as chairman of the Association of British Motor Racing Clubs.

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2 MARCUS LITTLEWOOD

RYAN AUTOSPORT NATIONAL RANKINGS

LITTLEWOOD'S BIG CHARGE BUT BRAY EXTENDS RANKINGS LEAD

Radical Cup UK star Marcus Littlewood has been on the move over the past month, but Ali Bray has extended his lead in the Ryan Motorsport Insurance Autosport National Rankings.

We first launched Autosport's 2025 winners' tables in May and Bray swiftly moved to the head of the leaderboard thanks to his impressive displays in the British Racing & Sports Car Club's Mazda MX-5 Championship. He remains unbeaten and bagged another three victories at Donington Park in June to already take his seasonal tally to 12.

As a reminder, the table treats every race win at a UK or Irish track equally – whether it is scored by ambitious young flyers in British Formula 4 or amateur drivers taking their first tentative steps in Caterham Academy, they all count for the same in our rankings.

Littlewood is now Bray's closest challenger but is still four adrift despite taking a hat-trick of his own at Snetterton. Next up is 750 Motor Club 120 Coupe Cup ace Matthew Highcock, whose recent Norfolk victories have catapulted him to the head of a growing gaggle of drivers on seven wins.

Ginetta Junior pacesetter Rocco Coronel and early-season table-topper Steve Gambrell are also on seven, while they were joined over the course of June by Monoposto master George Line – who has enjoyed further success at Silverstone in his Dallara F308 – GT Cup frontrunner Mark Smith and Clubmans Sports Prototypes contender Steve Dickens. Alistair Camp has also taken another win at Croft to move up from 10th in our last printed table in Autosport magazine to now sit ninth.

No one on six wins remains inside the top 10 and Aidan Hills, Paul Sibley and Will Blackwell-Chambers have all started to slip down the rankings. They are now 12th, 14th and 15th respectively.

For weekly top-50 tables, head to autosport.com/national

LEADERBOARD

Correct as of 18 June

POS	DRIVER (CAR)	OVERALL WINS	CLASS WINS	TOTAL
1	**Ali Bray** (Mazda MX-5 Mk1)	12	0	12
2	**Marcus Littlewood** (Radical SR3 XXR)	8	0	8
3	**Matthew Highcock** (BMW 120i)	7	0	7
4	**George Line** (Dallara F308)	7	0	7
5	**Rocco Coronel** (Ginetta G40 Junior Evo)	7	0	7
6	**Steve Gambrell** (Porsche 911 GT3 Cup)	7	0	7
7	**Mark Smith** (McLaren 720S GT3)	7	0	7
8	**Steve Dickens** (Mallock U2 Mk29)	7	0	7
9	**Alistair Camp** (Honda Civic Type R FN2)	3	4	7
10	**James Ibbotson** (Hillman Imp Super)	0	7	7

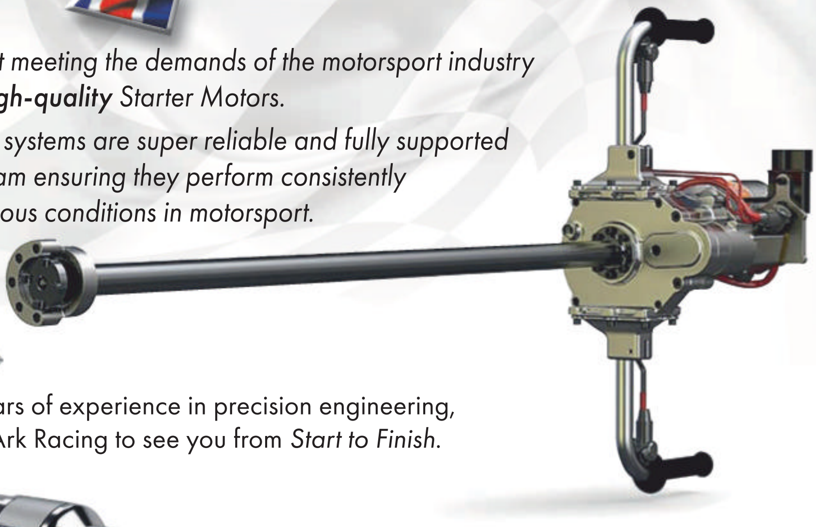
***Note:** All car races in UK and Ireland are included except qualification/repechage, consolation and handicap races. No races in other countries. Class wins are only counted when there are at least six starters in the class, except: when the race is part of a multi-stage event where six or more have taken part in earlier heats that feed into a semi-final or final; when multiple championships are merged in the same race, the 'overall' winner from the slower championship can count a class win as long as that championship has at least 10 starters across all classes. Only classes divided by car characteristics are included, not those divided by driver characteristics such as ability, professional status, age, experience (for example rookie or pro-am classes). Each race counts only once, so an overall winner's class win is not added. Where there is a tie, overall wins take precedence. Where there is still a tie, average grid size for a driver's wins determines the order.*

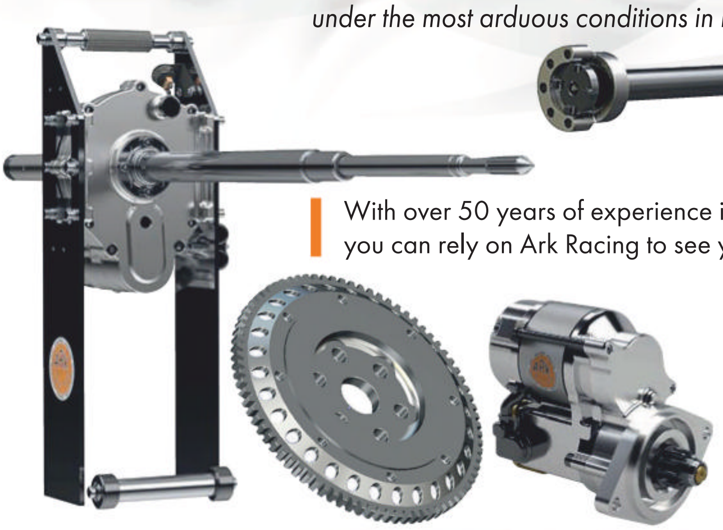
3 MATTHEW HIGHCOCK

STEVE JONES

4 GEORGE LINE

MICK WALKER





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LISTA

INSIDER

Stephen Lickorish on the pros and cons of fewer BTCC supports

Much has been written and spoken about the failure of the proposed TOCA Junior series to get off the ground this year. But regardless of the relative merits and pitfalls of that category's approach, the effects of its struggles continue to be felt and are only just becoming fully clear – particularly when it comes to British Touring Car Championship event timetables.

The decision to postpone TOCA Junior's planned debut until 2026 was not made until late February, long after other championships had locked in their calendars. Therefore, it was not possible for direct replacements to be easily found. And this lack of content on the BTCC undercard was inescapable at the May Brands Hatch and Snetterton rounds.

In Kent, it was noticeable how empty the outer paddock was, with only three series needing to fill the huge area, while in Norfolk spectators were treated to just two races on the Saturday (even this year's British Grand Prix is due to have more races on its Saturday) and track action concluded at an incredibly early 1620.

On the surface, the sparse paddocks and reduced number of races appear to be a negative – especially from a fan perspective. However, June's Thruxton event highlighted the benefits of a less congested schedule. Heavy rain on the Saturday afternoon soaked the circuit but, because of the room on the timetable, organisers could simply wait for the downpours to ease and the track to dry before running the second British Formula 4 contest. Had more supports been in attendance, at least one race may have been axed.

It could be argued that the available track time should be sold to a club at a reduced price to give them a chance of appearing on the largest national motorsport stage. But TOCA boss Alan Gow states that this would be unfair on the regular support series, which have had to shoulder the financial burden and have remained loyal to TOCA. Hosting such non-championship encounters could also have knock-on effects for other categories that had carefully planned their calendars to avoid clashes, only for an enticing event to suddenly appear at short notice.

Having fewer series on the bill does also bring other benefits to the regular F4, Porsche and Mini Challenge support acts. "We've made a commitment to the supports to give them a few extra laps here and there, some of them did and some of them didn't want to do that," says Gow. At most events, the final F4 and Mini race will be extended from its regular 20 minutes to 25.

"Some of them wanted extra time on the grid to give their drivers and teams more exposure on TV," Gow continues. "The support race package that we've got is what we've got for the rest of the year." Packing as many of the races into Sunday as possible is another way of attempting to boost their TV time and enhance their offering.

This scenario of reduced support races does not just apply to the BTCC. There were also only two races on the Saturday of the GT World Challenge Europe event at Brands Hatch in May. This has traditionally featured a mix of club categories, but only Equipe Classic Racing and the Mini 7 Racing Club joined the McLaren Trophy on the bill this time around.

Appearing at such larger events does draw a mixed response from club racing competitors, because there are positives and negatives. "There are two schools of thought," says David Smitheram, director of the Classic Sports Car Club, which has appeared at a variety of large events in the past, including GTWCE and British GT fixtures.

> ***"Some drivers love being at big events in front of big crowds. Others actively avoid it"***

"From a driver's point of view, some love being at big events in front of big crowds. Others actively avoid it because, in the past, they're typically more expensive to enter and you're probably going to be out in the sticks in the paddock and be the last race." Sure enough, the CSCC had a race axed at last year's GTWCE event, but the administering MotorSport Vision Racing did offer a prime Super Touring Power slot as a replacement.

Ultimately, in an era where every scrap of track time is usually desperately filled (amid mounting hire costs), it does seem strange having so much empty space in a timetable. Now the focus needs to be on making sure those voids are either reduced or successfully occupied by exciting action next year.

NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

June is always a busy month for national motorsport as organisers run plenty of events before the school summer holidays begin. Here are some of the notable moments

JEP

A VIRTUOSI F4 PERFORMANCE

OK, the Thruxton British Formula 4 races were not exactly highlights. The opener, in particular, was far too stop/start. But the results were notable as Virtuosi Racing scored its first series wins for over two years.

The squad's regular driver Martin Molnar burst into the lead at the start of race one, and all the cautions meant he did not have to work all that hard to stay there. Then guesting Italian F4 ace Salim Hanna won the finale in a Virtuosi 1-2 with Molnar, a result that gave the Hungarian the points lead.

SPECIAL AUSTIN-HEALEY RACE

There are always large grids when Equipe Classic Racing descends on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit. And among the massive entries for its June visit was a 42-car field of Austin-Healeys that assembled for a special one-make Syd Segal Trophy race.

And what a contest this proved to be. The 40-minute affair went right down to the wire and was settled by just 0.313 seconds. Joe Willmott used every trick in the book to just hold on in his 3000 from the chasing car of Ollie and Jack Chatham, sons of the notable Healey racer John Chatham.

MICK WALKER

JEP

ALGIERI'S DELIGHT AFTER MINI MAYHEM

Minis and Thruxton are always a recipe for dramatic racing. And that was certainly the case during the third race of the Mini Challenge Trophy's visit to Hampshire. There were battles throughout the field, cars cutting the chicane and more moves being attempted than a couple dancing the salsa.

Olivier Algieri, Rhys Hurd (remarkably without ABS) and Gabe Fairbrother managed to break clear from the chasing pack and had their own battle for the lead. Inevitably, it all came down to the final chicane, with Algieri forcing his way ahead of Westbourne team-mate Hurd around the outside, Fairbrother having dropped back with engine woes. "At the end, it was every man for themselves!" enthused Algieri.

Behind, it was even more frantic with as many as 12 Minis fighting for fourth. Ultimately, Alex Keens headed that one.

GARY HAWKINS

DAVIDSON GRABS HOME NASCAR PODIUM

He may have been aided by penalties for drivers ahead after a chaotic safety car restart, but Jack Davidson's maiden top-class Euro NASCAR podium at Brands Hatch was still a notable result. The former Mini racer had previously been victorious in the second division last year.

GARY HAWKINS

HISTORIC F1 ENTERTAINS AT BRANDS

Seeing Formula 1 machines at Brands Hatch is always special. And there was some entertaining racing when Masters' series for 1966-85 cars visited. After some scraps got a bit too close, honours were shared by Yutaka Toriba's Williams FW07C and Warren Briggs's McLaren M29.

MOTOR RACING
LEGENDS

Lynn is determined to level the playing field by tackling the thorny eligibility issue

PAUL LAWRENCE

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN HISTORIC MOTORSPORT

Prolific racer Shaun Lynn stepped from the cockpit to the organiser's chair when he took over Motor Racing Legends last year. Since then, he's developed bold plans

STEPHEN LICKORISH

The world of historic racing has undergone some sizeable changes in recent years. Several organisers have changed hands, new categories have been created and, as time continues to march on, there has been an increasing shift to find homes for ever more modern machinery. Yet some familiar problems remain. Take the age-old issue of eligibility or concerns about rising costs.

But Shaun Lynn has not been afraid of tackling those major topics head on since he took the helm of Motor Racing Legends around a year ago. A prolific historics racer – he has competed in everything from a Lotus Cortina to a Bentley Speed 8 – Lynn has not shied away from the big problems and has been determined to make a difference right from day one.

"One of the driving forces is eligibility – it's a real concern," offers Lynn when asked about why he wanted to take on an organisational role. "A lot of my friends, and myself, were coming away on a Sunday and there was too much chatter about 'his car wasn't legal', 'this is wrong', 'that was wrong', 'that engine's not legal', 'that shock absorber', 'that rollbar'. There was always something that someone was focused on instead of, 'I had a great time, I enjoyed it, my family enjoyed it, I had a great dice with somebody' and that's how it used to be. But you can't wind the clock back completely, I

STEVE JONES

Existing MRL categories have been supplemented with fresh ideas by Lynn

understand that, but I wanted to make a difference and work towards a fairer playground for everybody.

"So, when I retired from the city after my wife passed away six years ago, one of the things I wanted to do was to try to make a difference within classic racing. The opportunity came along when I started speaking to Duncan [Wiltshire, previous MRL chief] because he had just been appointed the new chairman of the RAC and it was the perfect meeting point. I wanted to make a difference and he was looking to potentially move on."

Lynn immediately began to address his concerns about eligibility. From an MRL perspective, he hired more scrutineers, but this is a subject that stretches far beyond one individual historic racing organiser. Instead, Lynn started talking to the 'competition', and met with fellow club bosses and event administrators to come up with a strategy that would benefit them all.

"The truth is classic racing used to be the cheaper way of doing racing but it no longer is," he explains. "This drive to be the fastest, the quickest has I think really hurt the industry. And the market has become event-driven where people don't look towards a championship, people don't look towards going to some of the smaller circuits. Because everything is so expensive, they look to just do the big events: Goodwood, Le Mans Classic, Monaco.

"I reached out to Peter Auto, to Goodwood, to Masters and we all have come together and started speaking about this situation and we've agreed that we will work together around the eligibility of each car – whether it's an E-type, a Cobra, a GT40, whatever it may be – where a specification [is developed] that can run with all of us. Now, we've all accepted you can't put the genie back in the bottle in regard to making an engine unengineered. But what we can try to do is control it with potential rev limits, because most engines in classic racing now are making 25% more horsepower than they made in period, which means everything else in the drivetrain has got to accept that – gearbox, driveshafts, differentials – so everything's needed upgrading.

"As much as it's a sport, it's also a business and what we try to do is work with the preparers to come up with a happy medium with regards to each car. It will not be an overnight job, it's going take a few years to get this right, but hopefully we can get classic racing into a position where there is a more equal playing field where people want to come out every month rather than once or twice a year because it's so expensive."

Having an eclectic mix of historic machines means Lynn has first-hand experience of the "crazy" development race that is continually pushing up costs. "I bought a gear for one of my cars and it was a modern prototype and it was £700, but the gear for my GT40 »

> *"Most engines in classic racing are making 25% more horsepower than they made in period"*

GT3 Legends has been an instant hit and longer races are now planned

STEVE JONES

> *"People will look at their bill and we've got to be careful not to drive everybody to the golf course"*

was £2500," he cites as one example. "I know that's a generalism but it's crazy and the GT40 gearbox cannot do anything like the amount of hours the modern prototype can. I said this is madness, no matter how much money you've got, people can't afford to do this. We've got to be careful not to drive everybody to the golf course. People will look at their bill and talk to their wife or husband and say I can't warrant spending that amount of money."

In a bid to stop competitors picking up their clubs and heading to the putting greens, Lynn has also instigated a revamp of MRL's portfolio. He has reinvigorated the organiser by tweaking some of its existing series and adding new categories such as GT3 Legends, which caters for GT3 machines homologated between 2006 and 2012. After a successful pilot race last year, 24 cars were on the grid at May's Donington Historic Festival and it has clearly struck a chord. "People are really excited about it," says Lynn, who explains the initial idea came from former Goodwood figure Jarrah Venables. After discussions with GT3 creator Stephane Ratel, the original SRO scrutineer Jacques Berger has come on board. "No one can get anything past him because he was the guy that wrote the rules!" notes Lynn, who has ambitions of hosting a three-hour GT3 race in the future.

Lynn acknowledges other organisers will follow the GT3 path – Peter Auto has just announced a similar series (see News) – but there is a huge supply of these cars that had previously been mothballed and can now be unleashed on the track once more. "I always think that if anybody collects race cars, they shouldn't just put them in a museum or hide them away, they should get them on track because they're race cars and that's what they were built for, so it's lovely that these cars are getting back out on track," reckons prolific historics racer Nigel Greensall, who is set to join the grid later this year and has already helped coach some of the GT3 newbies. "It's a generational thing as well. If you think back 15 or 20 years and the folk that were watching those cars or aspiring to those cars, it's that generation now that are coming into the sport and are thinking about what cars excited them and what cars make them think about going racing. GT3 appeals to so many people because it's such a broad range of different manufacturers."

Julian Thomas was among the historic regulars taking part at Donington after buying an Audi R8. "When you're sat on the grid and there's Ferraris and Lamborghinis around you, it's great," he says, even if technical troubles blighted his weekend. Alongside those Italian stalwarts, there was also a rather rarer Ford GT among the Donington line-up, which made for an intriguing mix.

Another new series being instigated by Lynn is the Generations Trophy (see News), which will team parents

Under 2-Litre Touring Cars is back to having standalone grids again

STEVE JONES

Demonstrations from expensive or unusual cars are part of the plan

STEVE JONES

The HRDC has also now been acquired by Lynn but has a different offering

RICHARD STYLES

and their children in a field of MGBs designed to be an accessible entry point. But the focus has not just been on new ideas; existing categories have also been given a revamp, with Lynn bringing in former Peter Auto head of competition Pierre-Antoine Lecoutour to oversee MRL's new era. The world of historic tin-tops is one example. The combined Historic Touring Car and Under 2-Litre Touring Cars grid at last year's Donington Historic was just 13, with only two U2TC entries. This year HTCC was at 20 and the standalone U2TC contests attracted 15. "I loved U2TC back in the day," says Lynn. "Unfortunately, those cars have been the victim of over-development and, if you weren't investing a huge amount of money, you were going to slip back very quickly. Also they're not easy to drive, but they're great fun, so we wanted to reignite U2TC and take it out of the Touring Car grid."

There has been a focus on improving the paddock atmosphere too, and giving the events greater promotion. Lynn has sought to "take away some of the clutter of the paddock" by introducing marquees in which all the cars from each MRL series are grouped together, helping to build camaraderie between rivals. "I've not seen as many people at a Donington Historic Festival for about six or seven years," points out historic racing stalwart Chris Ward, who praised the introduction of a lunchtime pitlane walkabout that proved popular. "We need to engage the public because you never know – there could be the next GT driver among them."

Another crowd-pleaser in Leicestershire was the demonstration of two V10-powered Formula 1 machines, including a Williams Heritage-operated FW22 that was driven by six-time Indy 500 starter James Davison. And Lynn says more of these demonstrations are planned. "If you've got a car that's historically important but you don't want to race it, you can take it out," he says. "I've got a couple of trailer-queen cars that I've never taken to a track to race in anger, but would love to just do a few laps in them and enjoy them."

The focus for Lynn is not just on MRL, however. Earlier this year he added a second organiser to his portfolio when he bought the Historic Racing Drivers Club. Its founder Julius Thurgood remains in charge but, considering both appear at many of the same events, having shared ownership brings many benefits. "The big thing for me was, because of Julius's enthusiasm and his attitude, it was so welcoming and that's what we need," enthuses Lynn, who has long admired Thurgood's way of managing series. "Especially because he comes in at a different price point to Motor Racing Legends, a very different offering, no real frills but you get good racing, you get cheap racing on a good weekend with MRL. It's a good fit and a good marriage."

Helping to provide financial stability for the HRDC is yet another way in which Lynn is trying to make a difference in historic motorsport. Judging by his first year as a club chairman, it's abundantly clear that he is determined to act upon his words. And historic racing should be all the better for it.

STAR CLUB CAR

THE UNIQUE SPORTSCAR BACK ON TRACK AFTER NEARLY 70 YEARS

Raced by rising star Graham Hill at Silverstone in 1957, the Willment has made its long-awaited return after a lengthy restoration

MARCUS PYE

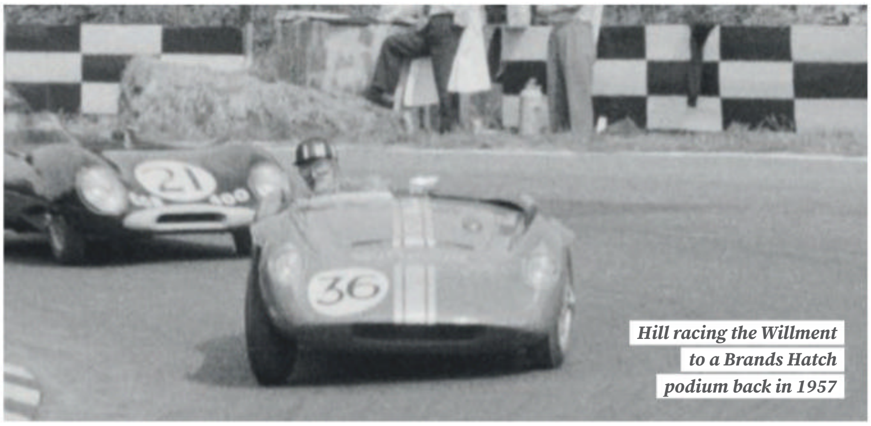
To many onlookers, the battle-scarred pea green Willment sportscar at the back of the eclectic Historic Sports Car Club Griffiths Haig Trophy races at Silverstone at the end of May might have been overlooked as insignificant. But, for owner Andy Storer, returning a unique bolide to the scene of its penultimate race, with emerging talent Graham Hill at the wheel, on 14 September 1957, marked the emotional end of a 20-year odyssey.

John Willment's stellar motorsport legacy was topped by his JW Automotive Engineering team's Le Mans victories with Ford in 1968 and 1969 (see panel, p145), but its early steps were riddled with grandiose folly. Willment had the ability to create technical tours de force, and nous for employing great people but, mirroring BRM's shaky start, over-complication delayed projects destined for underachievement.

Willment's 500cc Formula 3 car is a salient example. Simplicity should have been key but, instead, Willment's creation – clothed in lavish aluminium bodywork – featured a bespoke water-cooled four-cylinder DOHC engine, mated to a custom-made transaxle. The streamliner may not have raced, but photographs set eyes popping.

Its 1500cc Willment sports-racer successor at least reached the circuits. Replete with razor-edged clamshell-ended body and swooping tail crafted by coachbuilder Grays of Poole, it looked the part. If the alloy Coventry-Climax FWB SOHC engine, canted left, was a nod to convention, its drivetrain and running gear were not. Willment cast his own five-speed gearbox, diff casing and brake drums, mounted inboard at the rear within the crook of a tubular de Dion axle. For wheels, John went to Italy for the best money could buy. The legend 'Willment-Climax by Borrani' is even engraved into the centres.

The car was raced sparingly between tests. On 9 September 1956, Les Leston retired the distinctive #35 machine from the British Racing & Sports Car Club F2 race at Brands Hatch – named for the slow-starting 1500cc class, yet comprised of sportscars, it was won by Colin Chapman's Lotus 11. Leston was entered by Willment Speed Shop, headed by brilliant chief engineer John 'Spike' Winter, who joined Willment's expanding Twickenham empire.

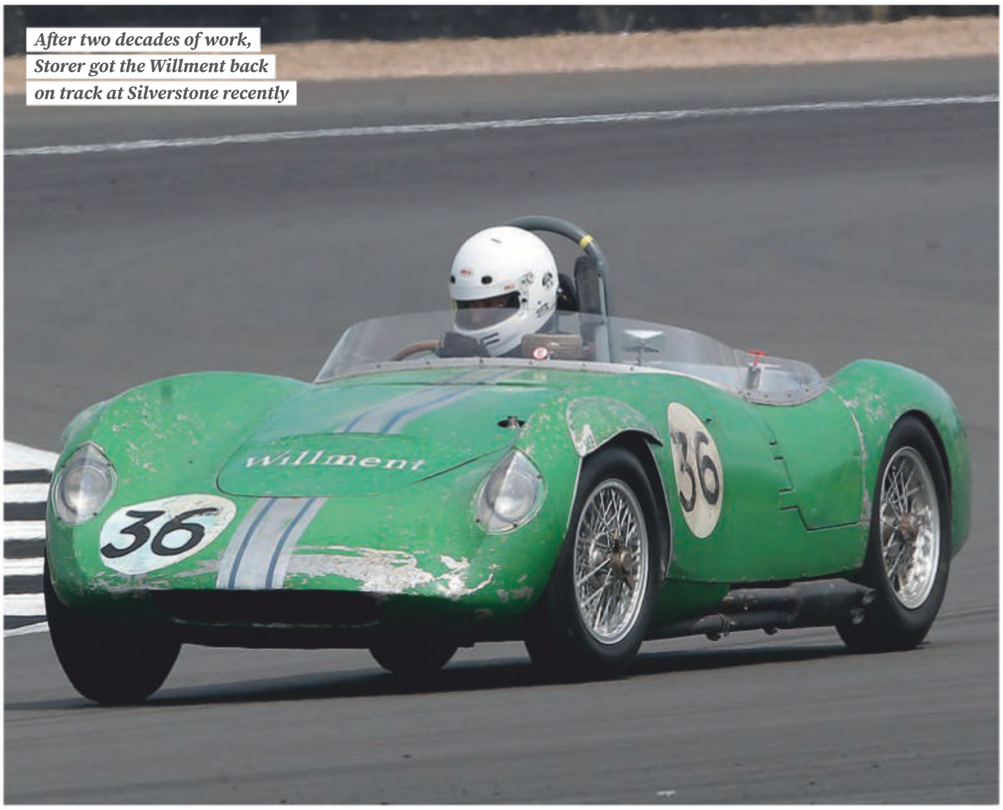

GEORGE PHILLIPS

Hill racing the Willment to a Brands Hatch podium back in 1957

In 1957, the sportscar was initially entered for Graham Hill at Brands Hatch on 5 August – thought to be the future double F1 world champion's first professional engagement, something even Damon Hill knew nothing of until the Willment's saviour Storer joined Goodwood's 2022 Revival cavalcade honouring his father, 60 years after his first title with BRM.

At Brands, late entry #36 Hill finished second to Chapman. Again entered by CJ Willment, as #37 Hill was unplaced in the BRDC's International Trophy race at Silverstone on 14 September. Storer only discovered recently that three weeks later, Vanwall F1 star Stuart Lewis-Evans drove the car to eighth in the Oulton Park Gold Cup race. As #5, they finished three laps down, one ahead of Hill's Lotus.

On Boxing Day 1957, Lewis-Evans was third at Brands in the first production version, powered by a Climax FPF twin-cam engine. It was previously track tested there by Autosport's John Bolster, whose story was published in the magazine's 6 December edition (right). That the Willment Speed Shop opened a Californian division to augment a US West Coast dealer added to the »



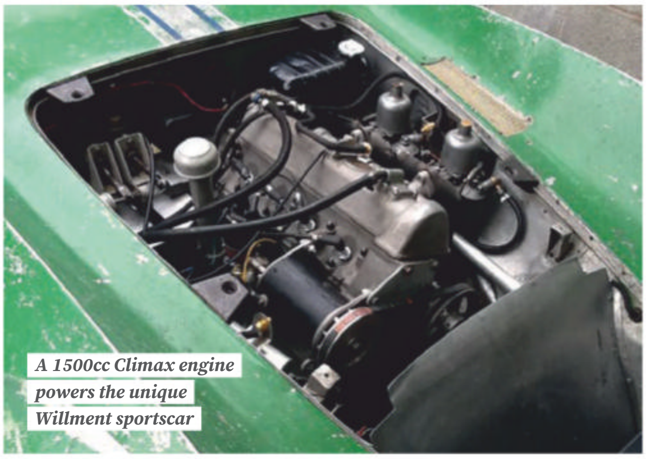
After two decades of work, Storer got the Willment back on track at Silverstone recently

MICKWALKER

JOHN BOLSTER TRIES THE **WILLMENT**

1½-litre Sports-Racing Car

Car had some illustrious former drivers, including double F1 champion Hill



A 1500cc Climax engine powers the unique Willment sportscar

The chassis was in two pieces at times during Storer's restoration motorsport JOBS

NO 2 TECHNICIAN (RALLY - DACIA)

Prodrive

Key responsibilities:

- Carry out work as directed by the No 1 Technician/Chief Technician.
- Keep the No 1 Technician informed at all times of any additional work necessary on a car during build or repair.
- Perform On-Event and workshop maintenance as required by No 1/Chief Technician.
- Ensure car is always to the correct specification.
- Carry out other adhoc duties requested by the Team management

Who are we looking for?

Our ideal candidate will have previous rally experience with a strong ability to understand and interpret the build specification of a full car set up, and the ability to follow build and operational procedures accurately. You will be a team player and a good communicator with teammates and engineers. Good attention to detail is required, along with a flexible approach and preparedness to work overtime as dictated by the demands of the business.

What can we offer you?

- An attractive salary which will grow in line with your ongoing development and impact
- 25 days holiday (which increases with long service) with an opportunity to purchase up to 15 extra days
- Competitive lieu day policy
- Training opportunities for continuing professional development
- Onsite subsidised staff restaurant
- Car and pension salary sacrifice schemes
- Cyclescheme
- Exercise classes

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motorsport JOBS

QUAIFE

RACE CAR BUILD TECHNICIAN

Quaife

RT Quaife Engineering Ltd is a well-established engineering company based in Kent, which has been trading for over 50 years. We specialise in providing powertrain solutions to the motorsport industry, and control the entire process from design to manufacture in-house. We have modern facilities with state-of-the-art equipment to ensure we are always at the forefront of our field.

Role will include:

- General maintenance of company development vehicles.
- Full build and prep of car.
- Removal and installation of gearboxes
- Supervise and carry out full car preparation, set up/set downs.
- Work with engineers and carry out setup changes.
- Trackside support.
- Keeping a record of all car parts life number for each event (working to supplied life build sheets)

Capabilities:

- Minimum10 years previous experience in motorsport is essential.
- Basic fabrication and machining skills is preferable but not essential.

Personal Attributes / Skills:

- Be able to work independently to strict deadlines.
- To be able to work under their own initiative when necessary.
- To have a ‘can do’ proactive attitude and proactively support others.
- Complete tasks given within agreed time frames.

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motorsport JOBS

SENATE GRAND PRIX
EXCLUSIVE HOSPITALITY

OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE

Senate Grand Prix

Roles & responsibilities:

- Coordinating guest bookings including hotel reservations, race viewing tickets and transfers
- Managing guest lists and loading of bookings into CRM system
- Creating guest itineraries
- Working with stakeholders at F1 races to ensure smooth and 5* experience for clients
- Support Operations team with ad hock duties
- Assisting in general office administration duties.

Personal specification and attributes:

- Excellent organisational skills with the ability to work efficiently and independently
- Great communication skills with a strong eye for detail
- Quick-thinking and the ability to work well under pressure
- Patient, positive and “problem solving” attitude
- Experience of working within hospitality/travel industry
- Interest in working in the F1 industry
- Experience working with CRM systems and strong Microsoft skills
- Additional languages (particularly French) an added bonus

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KARTING ADMINISTRATOR

Silverstone

Key Responsibilities

Operational Management:

- Assist in the pre-opening phase, establishing operational standards.
- Support the Assistant Karting Manager in the creation of different product types, product mix and scheduling.
- Collaborate with wider business stakeholders, venue, health and safety, security and medical ensuring efficient planning and smooth effective delivery to all customers.
- Be fully proficient in all Kart Silverstone systems, including booking, timing, etc.
- Track the onboarding and training of all new FOH team members.
- Take on ad hoc tasks as required by the Assistant Karting Manager.

Customer Experience:

- Monitor customer feedback, helping to respond to issues and presenting an overview to the Assistant Karting Manager on a weekly basis

Team Leadership:

- Champion department collaboration and communication to ensure seamless delivery of operations.
- Help lead training initiatives, ensuring all staff excel in safety protocols and customer care.

Skills, Knowledge and Expertise:

- A proven leader with a track record of success in team management and customer service, preferably within motorsport or leisure industries.
- Exceptional customer service skills, with a passion for creating extraordinary experiences.

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However, the car was set aside when new regulations for 1958 outlawed the centre-seat configuration espoused by Cooper for its popular T39s and stipulated minimum cockpit aperture widths and windscreen heights. The machine had lain stripped of its engine in one of Willment's sheds near the RHS's Wisley gardens since 1957. That was until Storer acquired the sportscar following Willment's death in May 1997.

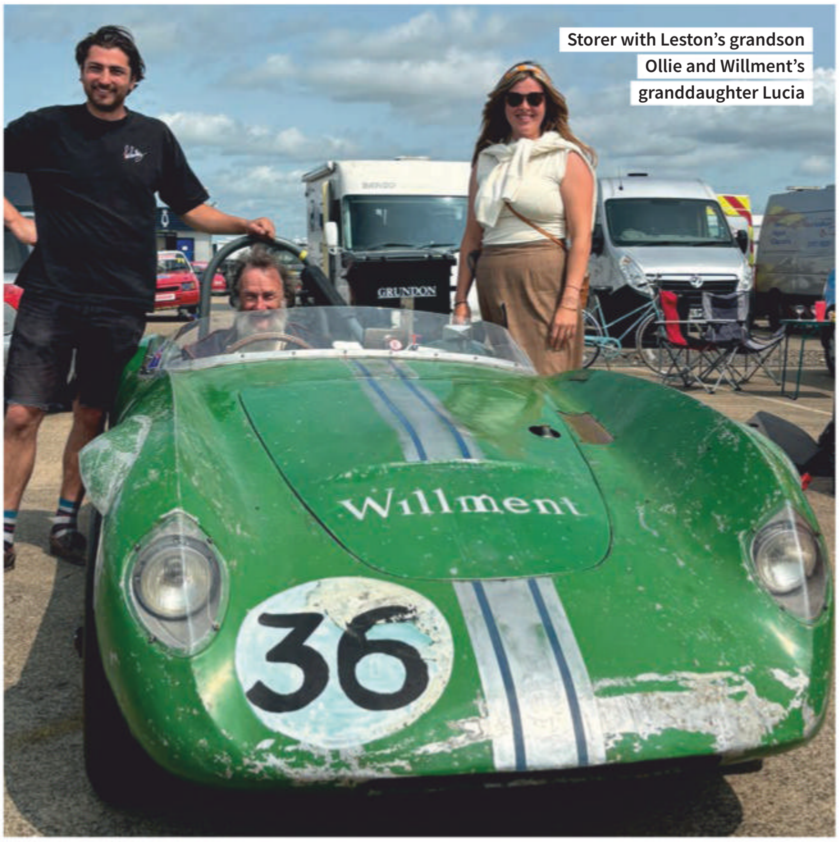
Storer's motorsport roots, like Willment's, lie in Austin 7s. Close to the family for 40 years, he ran JW's daughter Janet (Avia) in a Formula Vee Scarab, designed by A7 soulmate Stuart Rolt.

"The tubular steel chassis was cut in half for storage, but the green bodywork remained, with its silver and blue stripes [possibly a hangover from Leston's racing colours] and the remains of the number 36 painted on the nose roundel," says Storer of what he found. "Although it would have been simpler to repaint the panels, I did not want to strip away their originality so I've left them, wonderfully patinated by time.

"The gearbox, diff and brake drum castings were remade from period patterns for safety, and in LM25 alloy for strength and cost, but the Climax engine is to period specification and the wheels are original. Borrani kindly sent me the drawings, which was incredible.

"Recommissioning any long-dormant car, making it into a runner – the Willment was just about that for Goodwood's celebration three years ago – is a far cry from preparing one to race again. I took it to Blyton for a test before Silverstone, to make sure we didn't embarrass ourselves. But, watched by John Willment's granddaughter Lucia and Les Leston's grandson Ollie, we pulled 98.2mph on the Hangar Straight and finished both races, a lap down.

"Just finishing the car in time was a challenge. Because of its International Trophy meeting history, the retro event had to be the target to restart its CV. Unfortunately, my partner Anne was taken critically ill last summer, but her recovery continues in hospital. In life you have to deal with what is thrown at you, but I have to say the restoration work between visits has been therapeutic. Without support from family, friends and the wider motorsport community it would not have been possible."



Storer with Leston's grandson Ollie and Willment's granddaughter Lucia

THE MAN BEHIND THE ORIGINAL MACHINE

John Willment was ambitious, charismatic and loyal, with business acumen to match his wealth. Born in 1928, his family's construction firm Willment Brothers – with father Charles at its helm – made its fortune demolishing and redeveloping Second World War-ravaged London. Indulging and sustaining a passion for speed was never a problem.

His eye for design and engineering created some extraordinary cars. Having established a pioneering speed shop, then a spectacular Ford dealer group that spawned Europe's largest racing team, John Willment appeared omnipresent. His JW Automotive Engineering business, managed by old friend John Wyer, underpinned the Ford GT40 programme that won four Le Mans 24 Hour races – 1968's and 1969's with its own Gulf-backed team, which later worked its magic on Porsche 917s.

Willment's competition 'career' started with the Austin 7 Special 'Press On Regardless', developed and shared in 750 Motor Club trials with school pal Derek Wootton. Through another friend, Randle Ayrton, he met Aston Martin racer Dudley Folland and Wyer, MD of the Monaco Motors & Engineering Company in Watford. Monaco Motors rebodied Ayrton's Bugatti, which Willment competed in, and built the tiny Monaco 500, commissioned by Bournemouth motor dealer George Hartwell in 1947.

Willment's own 500 was too complex, but lessons learned from the sportscar outlined here led to a run of five or six 1500cc and two-litre Climax FPF-engined production racers, winners in Britain and the USA. But it was Willment's Fords – white and red-striped Anglia 105Es, Cortina GTs, Lotus Cortinas and the seven-litre Galaxie in which Jack Sears won the 1963 British championship – managed by racer Jeff Uren and cleverly marketed under the 'Race Proved by Willment' banner that earned Henry Ford's respect and trust, presaging greater things.

Sears excelled in Willment AC Cobras too, most notably the equivalent of Carroll Shelby's Daytona Coupes, built in-house. Local hero Jack duly won the foggy 1964 Autosport Three Hours at Snetterton. Willment entered F1 with Australians Paul Hawkins and Frank Gardner, and in the three-litre era his own chassis was to be powered by Coventry-Climax's Godiva V8, too late for Kieft's 1950s' GP entry. Lotus 30 and Willment-BRM sportscars, a Lotus Elan for F1-bound suspension guru John Miles and Escorts for Mike Crabtree brought Willment's racing to a close in 1973.

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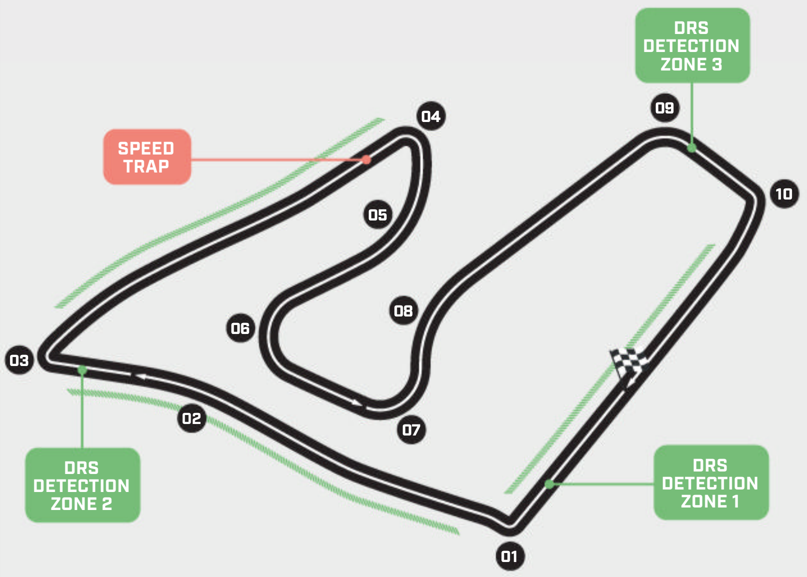
British GP
An outbreak of fervour greeted Lewis Hamilton's unexpected Silverstone victory in 2024

BAGNALL/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

AUSTRIAN GP

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 11



THE HILLS ARE ALIVE WITH THE SOUND OF V6 TURBOS

Those of a certain vintage may lament that the Red Bull Ring succeeded the fast and flowing Osterreichring stapled to the Styrian foothills, but the Austrian venue has become a modern classic since its return to F1 competition in 2014.

The deceptively simple course's elevation changes often alter the approaches to braking, and the trio of DRS zones ensure that passing moves into the first couple of corners can be responded to, creating fierce, tete-a-tete racing juxtaposed with the verdant, guesthouse-lined mountains. As the Osterreichring begat what was then known as the A1-Ring, the shorter circuit produced a series of intriguing races in the late 1990s and early 2000s before falling off the calendar with barely a whimper.

Refurbished at Red Bull's own expense when the late Dietrich Mateschitz bought the track, its return in 2014 has been popular, especially with the raucous Dutch in the central grandstand. Track limits controversies are also largely a thing of the past, thanks to the reinstatement of gravel traps and strips. Oh, and try the local schnitzel – it really is quite something.

Remember Teo Fabi's pole here in the Benetton-BMW back in the 1986 season?

SCHLEGELMILCH/GETTY IMAGES

RACE DATA

Venue	Red Bull Ring
First GP (for F1)	1970
GPs held	38
Circuit length	2.683 miles
Number of laps	71
Race distance	190.420 miles
Race lap record	1m05.619s Carlos Sainz (2020)
Pole lap record	1m02.939s Valtteri Bottas (2020)
Most wins	Max Verstappen **5**
Most poles	Max Verstappen **5**
Most starts	Kimi Raikkonen, Sergio Perez, Lewis Hamilton & Valtteri Bottas **13**

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 27 June	
Practice 1	1230-1330
Practice 2	1600-1700
Saturday 28 June	
Practice 3	1130-1230
Qualifying	1500-1600
Sunday 29 June	
Race	1400

WHERE TO WATCH

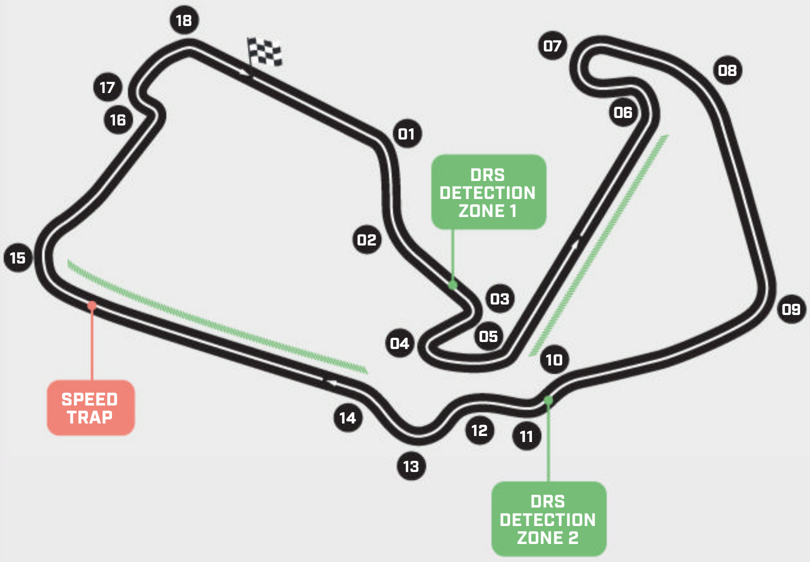
Live coverage	Sky Sports F1

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2024	**George Russell**	Mercedes
2023	**Max Verstappen**	Red Bull
2022	**Charles Leclerc**	Ferrari
2021	**Max Verstappen**	Red Bull
2021	**Max Verstappen**	Red Bull
2020	**Lewis Hamilton**	Mercedes
2020	**Valtteri Bottas**	Mercedes
2019	**Max Verstappen**	Red Bull
2018	**Max Verstappen**	Red Bull
2017	**Valtteri Bottas**	Mercedes

BRITISH GP

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 12



TAKE ME BACK TO DEAR OLD BLIGHTY

Although grand prix racing long preceded 1950, it was then at Silverstone where the world championship era began. Would the winner that day, Giuseppe Farina, have ever predicted that F1 would become such a global powerhouse in the following decades? Pity nobody ever asked him.

For us at Autosport, the British Grand Prix is *the* race to look forward to; our countless hours spent trudging around Silverstone for junior and club races give us a sense of belonging here. It seems like the British spectators feel the same way, such is the festival atmosphere that pervades the local fields in Northamptonshire. With four (or five, if we count Alex Albon) home drivers to root for, expect that aura to hit fever pitch.

Formerly the RAF Silverstone bomber station, the circuit was initially borne out of the access roads (and, in 1948, the runways) before a series of overhauls in the late 1980s and early 1990s set the framework of what the venue has become. With the wholesale changes made for 2010, the high-speed circuit took on an additional dimension. It's a favourite of the drivers.

Beautiful shot of Peter Collins and his Ferrari at Copse en route to 1958 victory

CAHIER/GETTYIMAGES

RACE DATA

Venue	Silverstone
First GP	1948
GPs held	61
Circuit length	3.660 miles
Number of laps	52
Race distance	190.262 miles
Race lap record	1m27.097s Max Verstappen (2020)
Pole lap record	1m24.303s Lewis Hamilton (2020)
Most wins	Lewis Hamilton **9**
Most poles	Lewis Hamilton **7**
Most starts	Fernando Alonso **21**

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

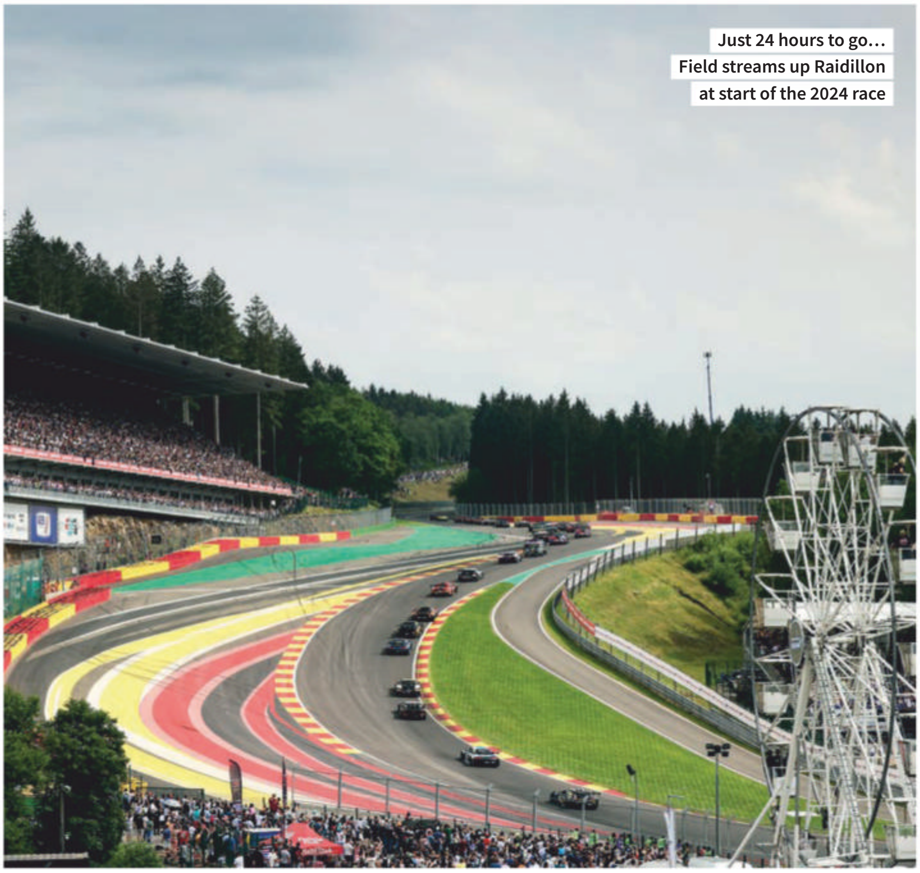
Friday 4 July	
Practice 1	1230-1330
Practice 2	1600-1700
Saturday 5 July	
Practice 3	1130-1230
Qualifying	1500-1600
Sunday 6 July	
Race	1500

WHERE TO WATCH

Live coverage	Sky Sports F1

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2024	**Lewis Hamilton**	Mercedes
2023	**Max Verstappen**	Red Bull
2022	**Carlos Sainz**	Ferrari
2021	**Lewis Hamilton**	Mercedes
2020	**Max Verstappen**	Red Bull
2020	**Lewis Hamilton**	Mercedes
2019	**Lewis Hamilton**	Mercedes
2018	**Sebastian Vettel**	Ferrari
2017	**Lewis Hamilton**	Mercedes
2016	**Lewis Hamilton**	Mercedes



Just 24 hours to go…
Field streams up Raidillon
at start of the 2024 race

SRO/JEP

SPA 24 HOURS

GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup Round 3/5
Spa 24 Hours, Belgium
28-29 June

Following Le Mans and the Nurburgring, the trilogy of Europe's big 24-hour races is completed at Spa, with a giant field of GT3 machinery and no doubt frequent mentions of the 'fickle Ardennes climate' that so often throws the race upside down.

Thanks to F1's hijacking of the traditional late-July Spa 24 Hours date in 2023, the Belgian event now represents a third consecutive weekend of twice-round-the-clock racing on the European continent, although at least that allows for a couple of extra hours of daylight.

For those who have never been, it's well worth the effort. The cars parade from Spa town, 11km away, to the circuit for a race that is unpredictable: Porsche, Ferrari, Mercedes, BMW and Aston Martin have all won in the past five years. And the *frites* are superb. Just don't forget to take your waterproofs…

McLaren junior Dunne
is at the top of the
Formula 2 standings

GRIFFITHS/FORMULA 1/GETTY IMAGES

FORMULA 2 & FORMULA 3

Formula 2 Round 8/14
Silverstone, Great Britain
5-6 July

Formula 3 Round 7/10
Silverstone, Great Britain
5-6 July

This season's Formula2 title fight is turning into an absolute gripper involving Irish series leader Alex Dunne, English talents Arvid Lindblad and Luke Browning, plus Dutch veteran Richard Verschoor and American Jak Crawford. The two races are bound to be epic. F3 is more of a one-horse race, with Brazilian star Rafael Camara almost unstoppable in feature races this year.

ADAC MOTORSPORT

DTM

Round 4/8
Norisring, Germany
5-6 July

This really is the time of year for blue-riband GT3 races. The Norisring street circuit is short – sub-50s lap times – but the racing is utterly brilliant, thanks largely to the long start/finish straight in combination with the very tight hairpin that takes the field up the other side of a dual carriageway. And the sinister backdrop of the Nazi grandstand serves as a living, breathing history lesson of the follies of out-of-control nationalism.

No post-Le Mans hangover… The WEC field jets to Brazil for its Interlagos round

EBREY/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Round 7/14
Acropolis Rally
Lamia, Greece
26-29 June

Round 8/14
Rally Estonia
Tartu, Estonia
17-20 July

FORMULA 2

Round 7/14
Red Bull Ring, Austria
28-29 June

FORMULA 3

Round 6/10
Red Bull Ring, Austria
28-29 June

SUPER GT

Round 3/8
Sepang, Malaysia
28 June

PORSCHE SUPERCUP

Round 4/8
Red Bull Ring, Austria
29 June

NASCAR CUP SERIES

Round 18/36
Atlanta, USA
28 June

Round 19/36
Chicago, USA
6 July

Round 20/36
Sonoma, USA
13 July

Round 21/36
Dover, USA
20 July

INDYCAR

Round 10/16
Mid-Ohio, USA
6 July

Round 11/16
Iowa Speedway, USA
12-13 July

Round 12/16
Toronto, Canada
20 July

INDY NXT

Round 7/12
Mid-Ohio, USA
6 July

Round 8/12
Iowa Speedway, USA
12 July

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES

Round 3/6
Imola, Italy
6 July

TCR WORLD TOUR

Round 4/8
Vila Real, Portugal
5-6 July

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN

Round 4/10
Hungaroring, Hungary
5-6 July

Round 5/10
Paul Ricard, France
19-20 July

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Round 5/8
Interlagos, Brazil
13 July

FORMULA E

Round 9/10
Berlin, Germany
12-13 July

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

Round 7/13
Townsville, Australia
11-13 July

IMSA SPORTSCAR

Round 7/11
Mosport, Canada
13 July

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE SPRINT CUP

Round 3/5
Misano, Italy
19-20 July

SUPER FORMULA

Round 4/7
Fuji, Japan
19-20 July

OULTON PARK
MSVR

Porsches (Club, Boxster), 7 Racing, Focus Cup
28 June

KIRKISTOWN
500MRCI

FF1600, Roadsports, Libre Saloons, MX-5s, Fiestas, Mini Coopers, Historics, Austin 7s
28 June

SNETTERTON
MSVR

Snetterton Classic: Historic Touring Cars, U2TC, HRDC Allstars, Gerry Marshall Trophy, Jack Sears Trophy
28-29 June

CASTLE COMBE
CCRC

CCRC (FF1600, GT, Hot Hatch, Saloons), Sports Prototypes/GTs, MX-5 Cup
28-29 June

CROFT
BARC

Caterhams (7 UK, 310R, 270R, Roadsport, Academy), Mini Challenge Trophy, Northern Sports Saloons
28-29 June

OULTON PARK
BARC

TCR UK, CNC Sports Saloons, Civic Cup, Track Action, Junior Saloons, Scottish Mini Coopers
5 July

ANGLESEY
750MC

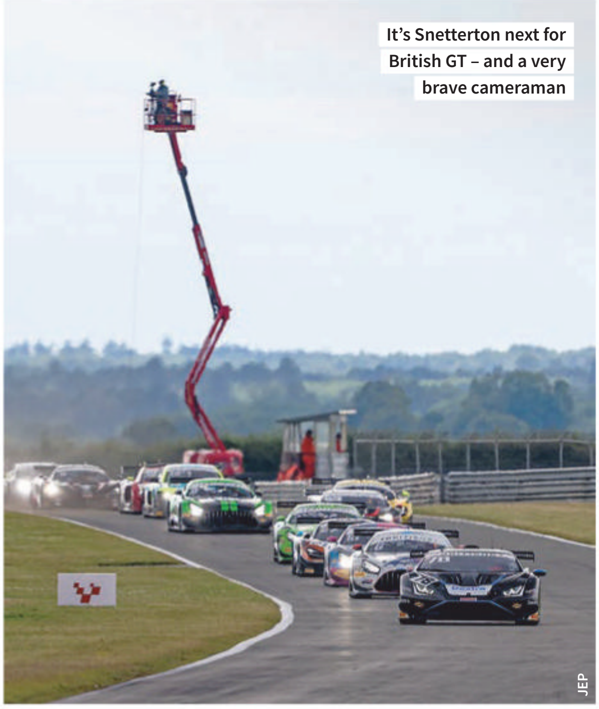
Calm All Porsche, Formula Vee, Locost, MR2s, Roadsports, Sport Specials, Sports 1000, Club Enduro, Armed Forces
5-6 July

SNETTERTON 300
CSCC

Magnificent 7s, Morgans, Slicks Series, Future/Modern Classics, BMWs, Midgets/Sprites, Swinging 60s, Jaguars/MG Trophy, Classic K/Jaguar Challenge, Tin Tops/Puma Cup, Interseries race
5-6 July

THRUXTON
BARC

Trucks, Britcar Endurance, Mini Challenge Clubsport, Monoposto, 750 Formula, BMW CC
5-6 July



It's Snetterton next for British GT – and a very brave cameraman

JEP

DONINGTON PARK MSVR

Equipe Classic Racing: Equipe 6 Hours
5-6 July

MONDELLO PARK MPSC

Boss Ireland, SEAT Supercup, ITCC, Formula Vee, Formula Sheane, Junior Minis, Fiestas (Zetec, ST), Legends, Strykers, Future Classics
5-6 July

HAREWOOD

British Hillclimb Championship **Round 7/14**
5-6 July

OULTON PARK BRSCC

Mazda MX-5s (Championship, SuperCup, Clubman), Production Cup/DS3s, Super Classic FF1600
12 July

SNETTERTON MSVR

British GT, GB4, Ginettas (GT, Academy, Junior)
12-13 July

BRANDS HATCH HSCC

Derek Bell Trophy, Historic F3, Historic FF2000, Historic FF1600, Classic FF1600, Guards Trophy, Historic Roadsports, 70s Roadsports, Pre 66 Saloons
12-13 July

CADWELL PARK 750MC

F1000, MX-5 Cup, Classic Stock Hatch, Clio Sport, Ma7das, Type R Trophy, Swift Sport, 116 Sprint/120 Coupe, 116 Trophy, Historic 750F
12-13 July

CROFT BRSCC

Fun Cup, SuperSport Endurance, Pro Sports Sprint, Audi TTs, Modified Fords
12-13 July

KNOCKHILL KMSC

David Leslie Trophy (Minis, Fiestas, C1s), Fiesta STs, Citroen C1s, Legends, Modsports
12-13 July

BOULEY BAY

British Hillclimb Championship **Round 8/14**
15 July

VAL DES TERRES

British Hillclimb Championship **Round 9/14**
19 July

SNETTERTON BRSCC

C1 Endurance, ClubSport Trophy, Fiestas (ST240, Junior), CityCars, BMWs (Compact, 1 Series)
19-20 July

DONINGTON PARK MSVR

Bernie's V8s, Clio Cup GB, Clubmans, EnduroKa, Miata Trophy, Snetterton Saloons, Trackday (Championship, Trophy)
19-20 July

LYDDEN HILL LHMC

United FF1600, Pickups, Super Saloons/Tin Tops, Intermarque Silhouettes, 2CVs
19-20 July

SHELSLEY WALSH

Classic Nostalgia
19-20 July

AUTOSPORT
RACING

British rising stars head to Silverstone
Ahead of Formula 2 and F3 (and F4!) racing at Silverstone, Autosport Racing Podcast host Kevin Turner speaks to Luke Browning, Arvid Lindblad, Louis Sharp and Callum Voisin.
autosport.com/podcast

GARY HAWKINS

BRANDS HATCH MSVR SUPER TOURING POWER

Super Touring Power: CTCRC (Super Tourers, Blue Oval, Classic Thunder, Jaguars, Pre-'66, Pre-'83, Pre-'93), New Millennium/Turbo Tin Tops, Legends
28-29 June

For the third consecutive year, Brands Hatch combines with the Classic Touring Car Racing Club to celebrate the peak era of the British Touring Car Championship: the 1991-2000 Super Touring ruleset. Star names will be in attendance, with some of them competing. A full programme of tin-top action from all periods since the 1960s makes this a must.

JEP/LAT/GETTY IMAGES

GOODWOOD FESTIVAL OF SPEED

10-13 July

The Festival of Speed was the first of Lord March's trio of motorsport events to be launched, in 1993, since when it has grown exponentially. This year's theme is 75 years of the Formula 1 World Championship, so expect a multitude of star drivers and cars to be in attendance in West Sussex. For those who like a competitive element, the annual hillclimb will take place as usual.

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BRITISH GP 2025
Why taking over five hours to confirm Russell's Canadian GP win is bad for F1

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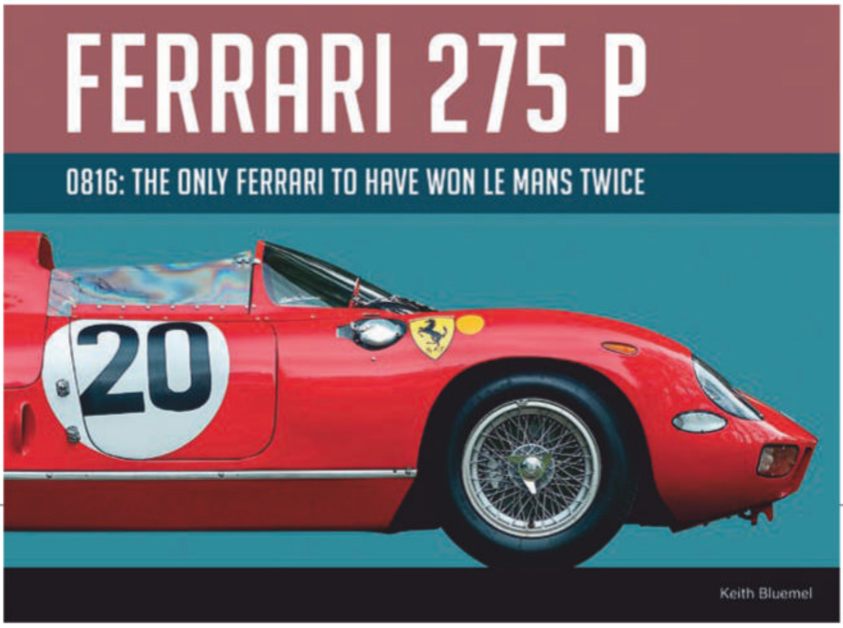

FERRARI 275 P

porterpress.co.uk
RRP £125

Vanishingly few cars have won the Le Mans 24 Hours more than once. Indeed, up until relatively recently, Ferrari believed no single example of its cars had done so. But of course this is Ferrari, for which swapping chassis plates to facilitate repairs and cross-border movements was common practice in *temps perdu*. In 2018 the company's Classiche department learned that the 275 P that had won Le Mans in 1964 had also won the 1963 event, where it 'stood in' for another car that had been damaged in a previous race.

Chassis 0816 started life as a 250 P, a car that arrived at a fascinating junction of the marque's history. Enzo Ferrari was famously disparaging of the notion of mounting a race car's engine behind the driver, insisting that the horse should pull rather than push – but, by the early 1960s, circumstances on track were forcing him to think otherwise. Unveiled at Monza in March 1963, the 250 P was the marque's first mid-engined sports-racer, designed around a new tubular spaceframe chassis. Following Ferrari convention, it took its name from the swept volume of a single cylinder of the 2953cc Colombo V12 that sat behind the driver.

The first two chassis constructed finished 1-2 in the 1963 Sebring 12 Hours and one of them also won the Nurburgring 1000Km, but it was during practice for that race when Nino Vaccarella shunted the third chassis heavily enough to rule the car out of Le Mans. 0816, the fourth chassis, was quietly substituted and the paperwork legerdemain went undetected.

In 1964, chassis 0816 received the larger 3285cc engine and was rechristened 275 P, winning the Sebring 12 Hours in the hands of Mike Parkes and Umberto Maglioli – another victory long believed to have been achieved by another chassis, this time owing to a paperwork mix-up at Maranello. The next action the car saw was at Le Mans, where Vaccarella and Jean Guichet guided it to victory. Ferrari's arms race with Ford then required new cars to be built, and 0816 was sold into private hands.

That's a potted history of the car – for the fully leaded version you'll need to obtain this lavishly illustrated book by noted Ferrari historian Keith Bluemel.

THE STORY OF
Maserati
A TRIBUTE TO AUTOMOTIVE EXCELLENCE
STUART CODLING
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THE STORY OF MASERATI

welbeckpublishing.com
RRP £14.99

Welbeck's series of compact if not quite pocket-sized marque biographies continues to expand as Maserati joins previous works (also by Autosport's senior writer) on Ferrari and Lamborghini. Like the latter company, Maserati has passed through several hands in over a century of existence, so you'd imagine it would be a challenge to package it all into 160 pages. But actually it's all here, from the scene-setter of Italy in the late 19th century and the Maserati brothers' formative years via racing, going bust more than once, the interlude under Citroen ownership, and latterly a brief twinning with Ferrari before being absorbed into the Stellantis Group.

There are some long-forgotten concept cars in there such as the 1970s Boomerang, too. But the backbone is the story of racing, since it's on track where the Maserati legend was born – the company only began making road cars in the late 1940s. So as well as complete chapters on Maserati's grand prix adventures and its attempts to conquer Le Mans, there's a trip across the pond to Maserati's two Indy 500 victories in 1939 and 1940.

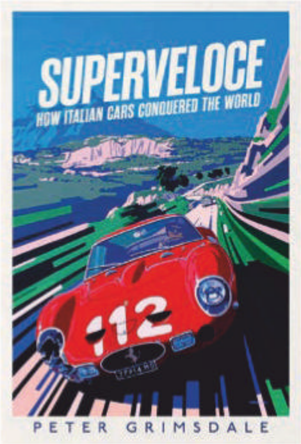
LEGO TECHNIC ASTON MARTIN VALKYRIE

lego.com
RRP £54.99

The revolutionary hypercar with a sprinkle of undisclosed Adrian Newey magic (famously, he began to get bored when it became clear there were rules to obey in the road car world too, such as headlight height) has made the leap to the racetrack in the form of the spectacular AMR-LMH seen in this year's Le Mans 24 Hours – and now the Valkyrie has been enshrined in self-build resin.

At 707 pieces this is an involved rather than difficult build, so it's rated for ages nine and above.

The model features functioning gullwing doors, steering (controlled by a lever on top of the car), and a detailed interior including a V12 engine with moving cylinders. It's part of a wider collaboration between Lego and the Gameloft Asphalt Legends Unite platform in which gamers will be able to play both the 'real' and the Lego Valkyrie in the game. A tenuous connection, yes, but that's late capitalism for you.



SUPERVELOCE

simonandschuster.co.uk
RRP £25

The industrial revolution largely passed Italy by, and the unification of the country in the late 19th century brought political and economic turmoil which rolled on into the 20th. In this tome Peter Grimsdale sets out to explain why, against that background, Italy became a byword for styling and engineering flair. *Superveloce* examines a century of design greatness in which marques such as Ferrari, Alfa Romeo, Fiat and Maserati fired the passion of car aficionados worldwide – helped by the bravery of legendary drivers such as Tazio Nuvolari, Achille Varzi and Alberto Ascari.

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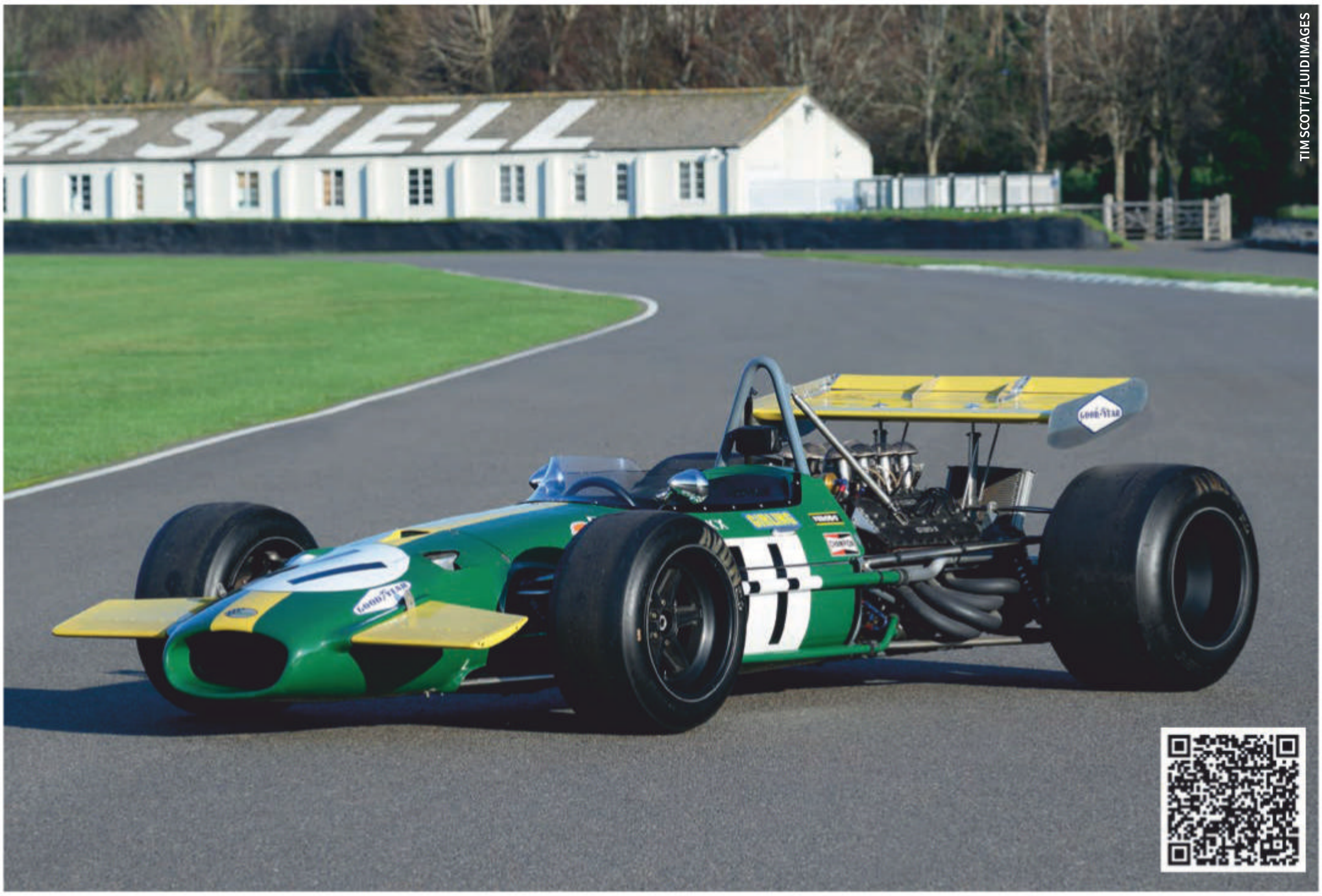
TIM SCOTT/FLUID IMAGES

1968-69 BRABHAM BT26/26A

The Ron Tauranac-designed BT26 had tough acts to follow: its double championship-winning BT19 and BT24 predecessors. The chassis was good, Jochen Rindt often qualifying near the front in 1968 and taking pole for the French Grand Prix. But poor reliability – usually related to the new Repco 860 four-cam V8 – severely hampered Brabham's season and limited the team to eighth in the standings. BT26-3 was used by Rindt in four races late in 1968 before being fitted with a Cosworth DFV, creating the BT26A. Jacky Ickx used chassis 3 for much of 1969, winning the Canadian GP from pole on his way to second in the drivers' championship. The final spaceframe Brabham to win a GP went on to race in the United States and is now in its 1969 Canadian GP form.

TIM SCOTT/FLUID IMAGES

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1989 ASTON MARTIN AMR1

The last, lightest and most powerful of just five works Aston Martin AMR1s produced for the 1989 World Sportscar Championship. It was first raced at the Wheatcroft Gold Cup, the Donington Park round of the WSC, by David Sears and Brian Redman, finishing seventh overall. Then, sharing with Stanley Dickens, Redman repeated that result at Spa. In its last period race, AMR1 05 finished eighth in the 1989 WSC finale in Mexico, driven by Redman and David Leslie. It has raced occasionally in historic Group C events, highlights including a second overall at Le Mans Classic in 2014 and an overall victory at Paul Ricard in 2016. Unused since that 2016 season, the car requires basic recommissioning, crack-testing and a new fuel cell.

1970 LOTUS 70

Canadian Lotus distributor Bill Brack campaigned Lotus 70, chassis 04 in North American Formula 5000 events from 1970 until 1972. He twice finished 10th in the championship with the Chevrolet V8-powered machine, while George Follmer was a race winner in a sister Lotus. Though rarely a match for the main McLaren and Lola opposition, the Lotus provides something different in the popular 'big banger', five-litre category. It is believed that 04 was campaigned into the 1980s before going into storage. It was rediscovered in 2006 and restored by James Faulknor in San Francisco, and has more recently been recommissioned by JW Race Service in the Netherlands.

JOHN BROOKS

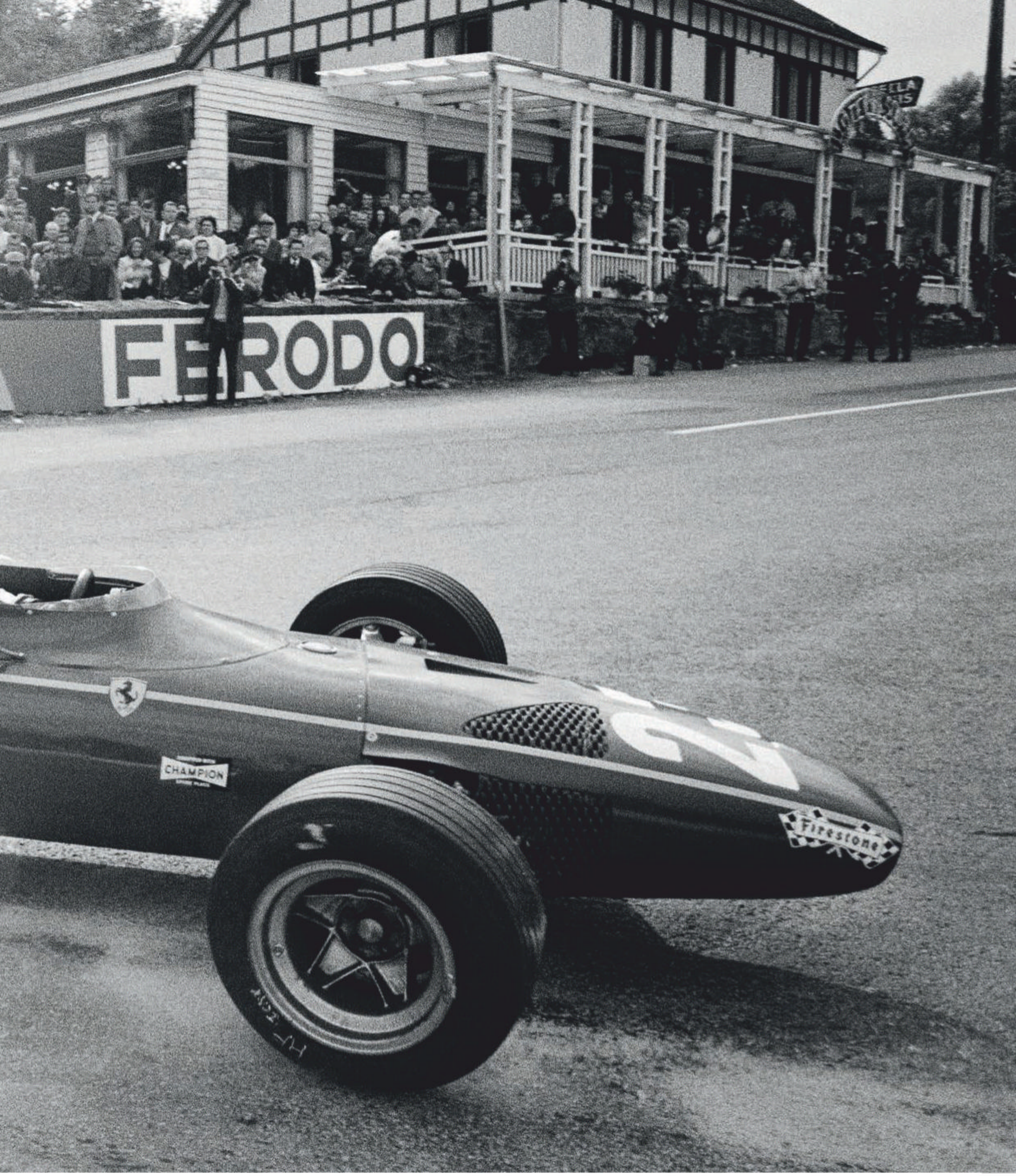
1999 PORSCHE 911 GT3-R

One of the original 996-generation GT3-Rs run under the White Lightning Racing banner, this Porsche was the last car to be raced by sportscar legend Bob Wollek. The Frenchman shared it with Johnny Mowlem to fourth in class at the 2001 American Le Mans Series opener in Texas, but was killed in a cycling accident ahead of the Sebring 12 Hours and the car was withdrawn out of respect. The Porsche raced twice at the Daytona 24 Hours and in the ALMS in 2000. Restored by Lee Maxted-Page, it has raced in Peter Auto Endurance Legends since 2021. It's also eligible for Masters Endurance Legends, HSR Daytona and Sebring, and Le Mans Classic.

FINA
INI
FINA
23

Engine trouble can't stop Ickx

Spectators at Spa's La Source hairpin would have been aware as early as lap four of the 1968 Belgian Grand Prix that the V12 engine in Jacky Ickx's Ferrari 312 wasn't enjoying the benefit of its full complement of cylinders. The 23-year-old had qualified third and was holding the same position when the audibly obvious loss of two cylinders precipitated a drop down the order to sixth place. But Ickx was, according to Autosport, driving "valiantly" and, when later in the race his car "found another pot from somewhere and was now on 11 cylinders", he was "very much in the running". Thanks to his doggedness and the race's withering attrition rate he crossed the line in third place to take his first F1 world championship podium.


FERODO
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Photographer Rainer Schlegelmilch/
Getty Images

Where Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium
When Sunday 9 June 1968

AUTOSPORT

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MANSELL'S RIOT!

150,000 fans go wild as track invasion sparks safety review

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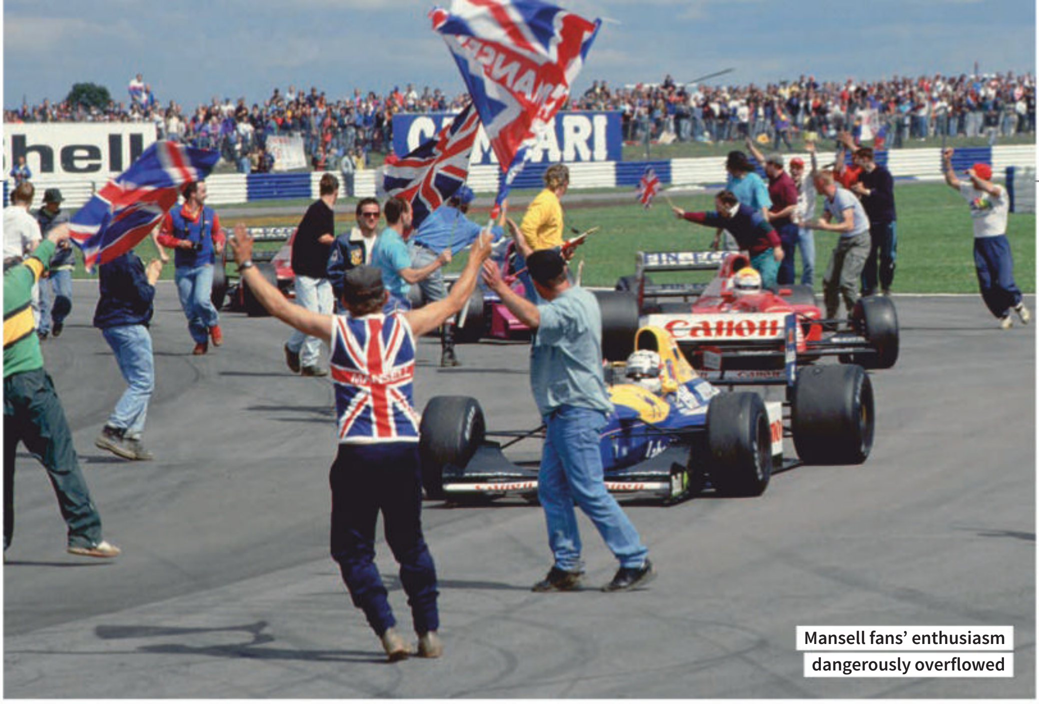

Mansell fans' enthusiasm dangerously overflowed

SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES

The peak of 'Mansell Mania' at Silverstone

16 July 1992

Lewis Hamilton has the record for British Grand Prix wins: an unbelievable nine. But there was something else about Nigel Mansell on home ground, and his Silverstone domination in 1992 was of a level we no longer see in Formula 1.

Mansell's Silverstone CV was already pretty good. He'd finished a fine fourth for Lotus as long ago as 1983, taken one of his greatest victories after chasing down Williams team-mate Nelson Piquet in 1987, scored two against-the-odds runner-up spots in 1988 and 1989, and grabbed pole with Ferrari in 1990 before his dramatic 'F1 retirement' when his 641 robbed him of another win the following day. In 1991 he won from pole as Williams-Renault really started to challenge McLaren-Honda's spot at the top of F1.

By the time the F1 field rocked up in Northamptonshire for round nine of the 1992 season, Mansell had a stranglehold on the championship, six wins launching him to a 32-point lead in the days when just 10 were awarded for victory. The gizmo-laden FW14B, complete with traction control and active suspension, was perfect for Silverstone and Mansell was far more willing to grab the complicated car by the scruff of its neck than was team-mate Riccardo Patrese.

Mansell flanked by Patrese and Brundle on podium

HEWITT/ALLSPORT/GETTYIMAGES

Qualifying was ridiculous, particularly when you consider that 0.834 seconds covered all 20 cars in Q1 at this year's Spanish GP. After setting the pace in practice, Mansell obliterated the opposition with what he described as "a perfect lap", which stopped the clock at 1m18.965s. Patrese was *1.919s* slower, *third-placed* Ayrton Senna's McLaren 2.741s adrift! The race performance continued the theme.

Despite being beaten off the line thanks to too much wheelspin and having to repass Patrese on the run between Copse and Maggotts, Mansell's lead by the end of the first 3.2-mile lap was 3.3s. Next time around it was 6s, then 7.9s, then 10.2s. After 10 laps, Patrese was 20.6s behind, himself a few seconds clear of the battle for third between the Benettons of Martin Brundle and Michael Schumacher, and Senna's McLaren.

Thereafter Mansell pumped in quick laps when he felt like it, Patrese held second and the main interest was the Brundle versus Senna battle for third (see page 58). On lap 30, Mansell made a planned (and, at 12s, leisurely) tyre change, having built up a lead of nearly 40s. By the chequered flag, he was 39.1s ahead, having set a fastest lap 1.8s quicker than anyone else. Had he wished, he could surely have lapped the entire field.

"Yes, Nigel had the fastest car, but it is difficult to imagine that anyone on earth could have bettered that performance," reckoned Autosport's Grand Prix Editor Nigel Roebuck. "He wasn't in a race, as such. He merely set off for 59 laps at the same time as the rest of the field."

A less savoury part of the day came as Mansell took the flag. Stories of traffic queues had hinted at the level of Mansell fervour and more spectators arrived than had been anticipated. Come the end of the race – for Mansell, not all the other cars – many fans invaded the track. The dangerous scenes, from which everyone fortunately escaped serious injury, raised concerns over crowd control.

It was probably peak 'Mansell Mania'. By the following July's British GP, reigning world champion Mansell was successfully taking on the challenge of Indycar and British hopes rested with Williams rookie Damon Hill, who had finished 16th – and four laps down – on his F1 debut with Brabham at Silverstone in 1992.

KEVIN TURNER

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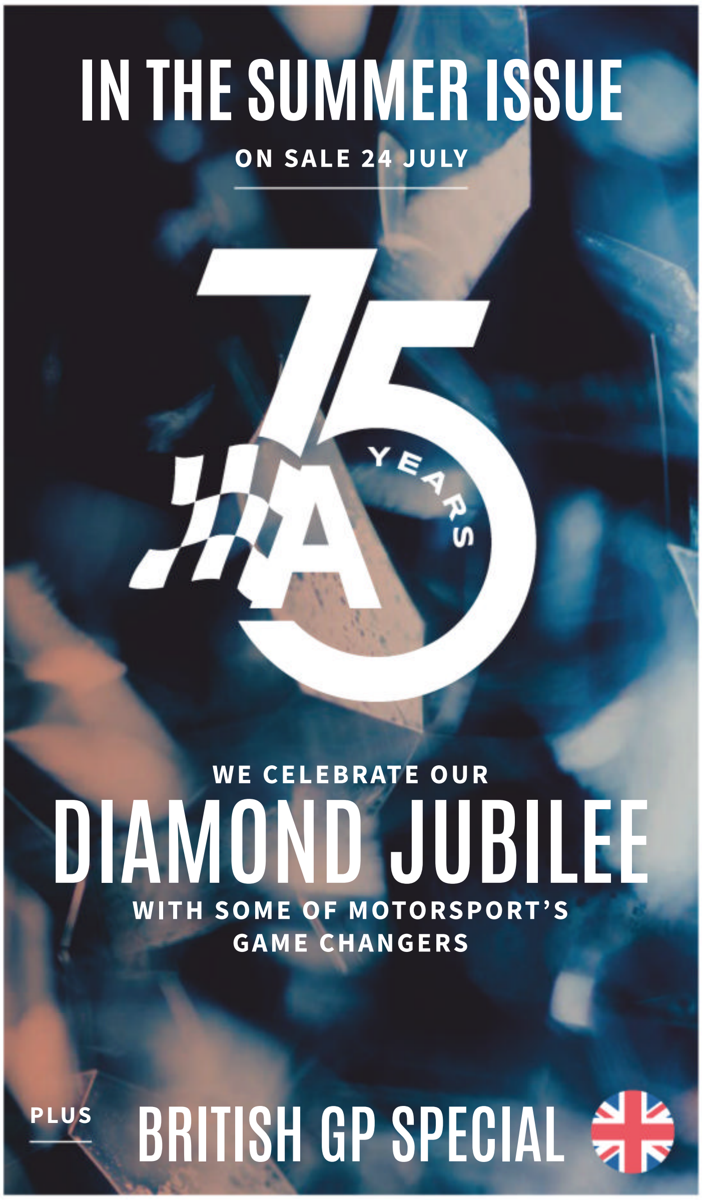

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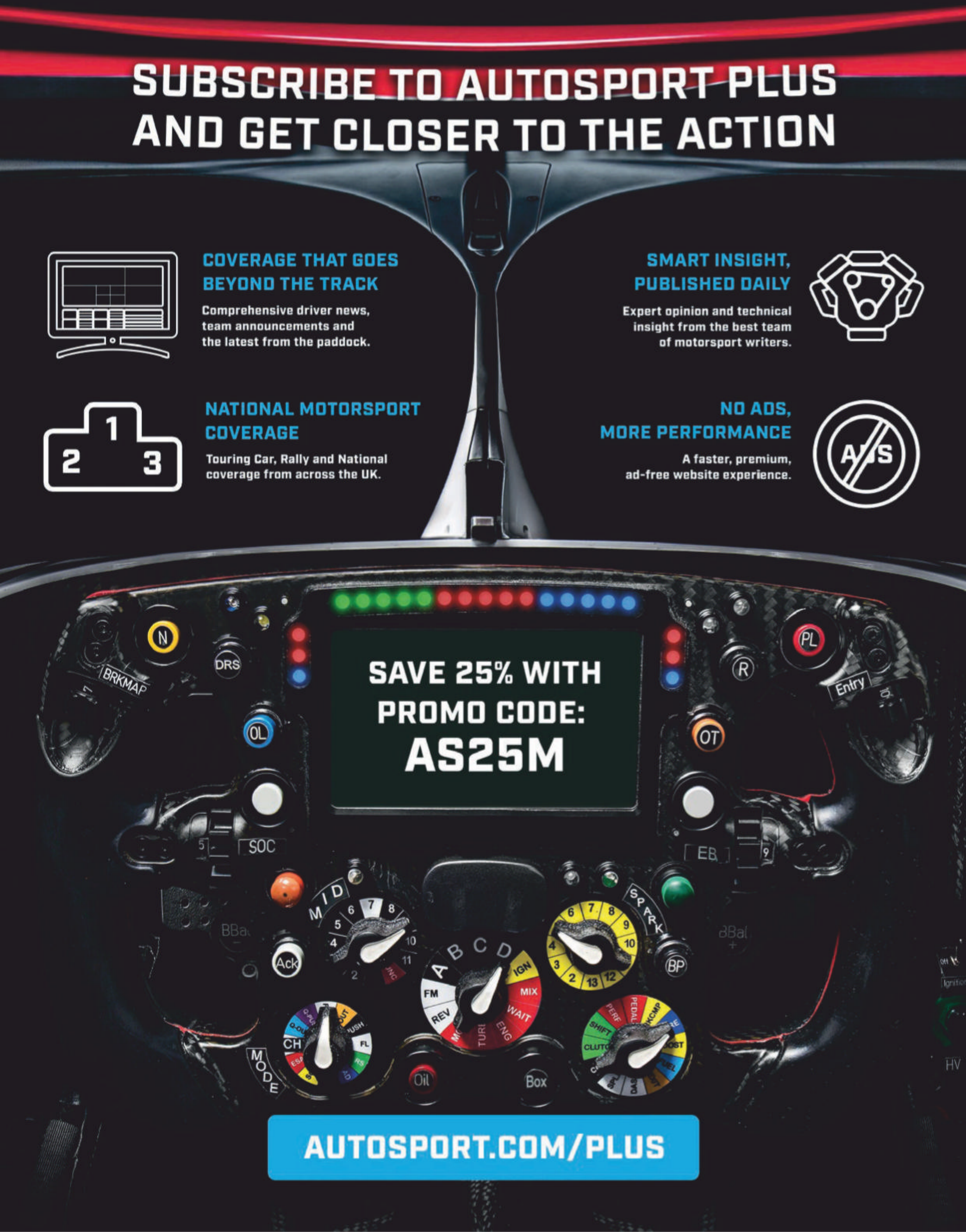
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